

SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council - 19 November 2019

Present: Councillors Dr W Matthews, D Pepler, R Bagge, M Bradford, S Chhokar, T Egleton, B Gibbs, P Griffin, B Harding, P Hogan, G Hollis, J Jordan, P Kelly, J Lowen-Cooper, N Naylor, J Read, R Reed, G Sandy, R Sangster, D Saunders, D Smith and L Sullivan

Apologies: Councillors D Anthony, P Bastiman, M Bezzant, D Dhillon and M Lewis

21. ONE MINUTE SILENCE

A minute's silence was held for Councillors Janet Simmonds and Julian Wilson who have both passed away recently. Janet Simmonds began her career as a District Councillor in 1999 and remained a Member until she retired in 2015. Julian Wilson became a District Councillor in 2007 until he retired from the Council in 2012. Both Janet and Julian were remembered as dedicated councillors who always did their best for the residents of their wards.

22. PRESENTATION FROM CHIEF CONSTABLE AND DEPUTY PCC

Councillor Saunders entered the meeting at 6.05pm

Chief Constable John Campbell, the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) Matthew Barber, and Superintendent Amy Clements were welcomed to the meeting.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC), Matthew Barber, gave a presentation to Council on the role and responsibilities of the PCC and an overview of crime in the Thames Valley area. A PCC's responsibilities included but were not limited to, holding the Chief Constable to account for policing, developing a Police & Crime Plan for the area, setting the policing precept, scrutinising performance, engaging with local communities and supporting services who support victims of crime and restorative justice. It was noted that, with a population of 2.3 million and comprising of 18 local authorities, the Thames Valley area had the largest non-metropolitan police force in the country.

Members were taken through the strategic priorities of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Plan 2017-21 which were prevention and early intervention; vulnerability; police ethics and reform; serious organised crime and terrorism and; reducing re-offending.

Funding highlights included nearly £3 million to support victims of crime across the Thames Valley, £2.7 million for a Community Safety Fund which provided Councils funds to help deliver crime reduction, prevention and support services and £199k awarded from the Police Property Act Fund in 2018/19 to charities and community groups who assist in reducing crime and reoffending.

Council was informed that crime had remained at historically low levels in Thames Valley. There were 21,671 fewer crimes compared to 10 years ago and 41,322 fewer offences compared to 15 years ago. Thames Valley had seen recorded crime increase by 10.3% over the previous year, compared to the national increase of 8%. Violence against the person offences had risen by 40.7% and sexual offences had increased by 16.2% over the past year. Burglary dwelling decreased by 2%, criminal damage and arson decreased by 2.6%, drug offences increased by 9.9% and possession of weapons offences increased by 28.2%. The Deputy PCC reported that an increase in recorded crime whilst a concern to the public should be seen as a good thing due to the increase in proactive policing.

101 call waiting time was acknowledged as a significant issue and a number of improvements were being made including streamlined processes and simplified options when someone comes through on the line. In recent months the average time to answer had reduced to 2.5 minutes, and the aim was to improve this towards 2 minutes, then further improve it from there. The increase to the police precept had allowed for significant additional staffing resources, particularly to cover the 101 line and a new contact management system which was being introduced would also aid the improvements.

Chief Constable John Campbell then gave a presentation to Members on policing operations and top priorities, as well as further information on recorded crime and trends for the Thames Valley area. It was explained that whilst there had been an increase in sexual offences, few were stranger offences with the majority being domestic or child related.

The Chief Constable informed Members of the operational and organisational priorities identified in the Strategic Plan 2019/20. These included reducing crime and incidents through targeted and effective problem-solving, bringing more criminals to justice by improving the quality and timeliness of investigations, improving how the police protect the vulnerable by pro-actively identifying, understanding and reducing risk and harm and increasing the satisfaction of victims and other people in need.

The Chief Constable added to the DPCC's comments on the time to answer 101 calls and displayed a graph which evidenced the improvements over previous months. It was acknowledged that the wait times remained unacceptable to residents; however the focus on improvements was ongoing. From April to September 2018 101 calls were taking 8 minutes to be answered and as at September 2019 the average time was 3 minutes.

An overview of officers assaulted in 2019 was given, 29 in Chiltern and South Bucks had been assaulted, 589 force-wide in Thames Valley. Officers were receiving additional safety training including an increased usage of their taser.

Superintendent Amy Clements identified the key local issues which were burglaries (particularly with the use of the motorway network) and exploiting vulnerable adults. With all of these issues local intelligence was vital and members and residents were encouraged to share any intelligence with the force to ensure crime could be stopped. There were a range of crime prevention operations underway including collaborating to identify cross border offences and working with local authorities to raise the awareness of financial scams. One example given was getting vulnerable adults to buy vouchers, such as itunes as it was difficult to trace any transactions. There were also youth projects taking place and reference was made to one in Beaconsfield where diversionary activities were arranged. The Superintendent also informed Members that there were proposals in place to set up a Public Space Protection Order for Dorney Lake. In terms of safeguarding young people work was being carried out with the Missing and Exploitation Hub. There was a Facebook page for the Chiltern and South Bucks LPA which people could follow to learn more about local issues.

Force Challenges were also summarised to members and included maintaining the establishment levels across Thames Valley, managing budget shortfalls, ensuring high quality investigations and improving call handling performance.

Following the presentation the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable and LPA Commander responded to Members' questions that had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

To the Deputy PCC

Question 1 from Councillor T Egleton (Stoke Poges Ward): Are there any plans to improve public access to police stations in South Bucks as the nearest Police station is at Amersham, with a Police base at Taplow which is not open to the public?

The Deputy PCC reported that they were under pressure to make savings and the police counter at a police station was not really used now by the public who contacted the police either online or by telephone. It was important that police officers were visible patrolling the streets rather than sitting in a police station and that they used their mobile devices for reporting.

Question 2 from Councillor Patrick Hogan (Beaconsfield West Ward) : With the low level of successful convictions in South Bucks compared with other parts of the country what progress was being made with key partners to achieve a joined up criminal justice system that actually delivers in supporting policing?

The Deputy PCC reported that he was chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board and that TVP were working closely with partners. They used a Digital Evidence Management System to access information. The Board carried out reviews on performance of the different criminal justice partners to identify any areas for improvement. They had recently looked at witness care to ensure that cases were not delayed so that the witness had to return to court another day.

Question 3 from Councillor Paul Kelly (Burnham Church and Beeches ward):

The work of South Bucks Community Safety Partnership is vital in terms of bringing together organisations and the Community to reduce crime, the fear of crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and improve the quality of life for people in the District. What current initiatives are taking place in the District and will the PCC funding for these and other important initiatives continue in the future?

The Deputy PCC reported on the work of the CSPs which provided vital services for the public and informed Members that there were no plans to change the funding model for CSPs. There had been a recent change where some of the CSP funding had been top sliced to provide funding for initiatives across the Thames Valley e.g some of the funding was used for a theatre production for school children to raise the issue of county lines. The Office of the PCC also ran co-ordinating events for CSPs to share best practice.

Question 4 from Councillor Ray Sangster (Iver Heath Ward): If TVP were to receive additional funding to recruit more Constables, how would they be deployed to ensure that trust and confidence is restored in the constabulary?

The Deputy PCC reported that if the police received additional funding for police officers it would be a matter for the Chief Constable on how they were deployed but that the focus would be to increase resources for local policing to reduce crime. Reference was also made to the recruitment problem with regard to detectives.

To the Chief Constable

Question 1 from Councillor T Egleton (Stoke Poges Ward): When members of the public report fraud cases how do they get feedback on progress of the case? Who is responsible for fraud - the Local Area Commander or a centralised service?

The Chief Constable reported that serious fraud would be looked at by the Economic Crime Unit and local fraud would be looked at by CID. Action Fraud, a national helpline had seen a huge increase in reporting. It would help to have more resources to address fraud locally where relevant to increase accountability.

Question 2 from Councillor D Smith (Gerrards Cross Ward): The Police "101" telephone line has a target of getting all calls answered in less than three minutes and to get the call waiting time down to two minutes. How is this performance measure progressing, as residents are still complaining of having to wait longer than three minutes for their calls to be taken?

The Chief Constable made reference to the target to reduce call waiting times and that this had been achieved through additional funding from the PCC. The Deputy PCC reported that the latest data for 101 from 17 November was a waiting time of 30 seconds.

Question 3 from Councillor Dr Matthews (Iver Village and Richings Park ward): I would like to ask for clarity around the police criteria for issuing Section 61 orders

with regards to Travellers that are occupying public land as it seems that there have been some inconsistencies around this across the District.

The Chief Constable reported that the use of Section 61 Orders was not appropriate in all circumstances and that certain evidence needed to be provided. He commented that the legislation was not always clear in relation to unauthorised encampments and that a review of this legislation was being undertaken. The Government had proposed that local authorities should set up transit camps for travellers so that if they set up an unauthorised encampment they could be moved there. Often travellers would not want to use these transit sites and therefore would not set up unauthorised encampments in these areas. However, only a few councils in the Country had set these up e.g West Midlands and West Sussex. Superintendent Amy Clements made reference to travellers who were also organised criminals who undertook flytipping and they had used Section 61 for this purpose. There was a threshold to use this power. There was also a code of conduct in relation to travellers and a balance needed to be made between their community and the local community.

Question 4 from Councillor Sangster (Iver Heath ward): Please list all crimes that are subjected to crime screening and eliminated from police investigation within 24-48 hours?

The Chief Constable reported that there was not a screening policy used but commented that some forces did not investigate particular crimes. TVP used an assessment criteria called Threat Harm Opportunity and Risk (THOR) and stressed the importance of being proportionate in any inquiry.

Question 5 from Councillor Sangster (Iver Heath ward): We have had several incidents this year where travellers have forcibly entered locations and caused criminal damage. How many of these incidents have resulted with the travellers being charged with the appropriate offences and prosecuted ?

Superintendent Clements reported that no charges had been made as there was not sufficient evidence. The Councillor made reference to an incidence where a grinder was used to undo a lock to use a site for flytipping. Members noted that the police had attended the incident very quickly and had secured the site. Any case taken to court had to prove beyond reasonable doubt and had to meet a threshold test.

The Chairman thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable for their presentations. Members paid tribute to the work of the police and made reference to the tragic incident where PC Harper lost his life in the line of duty protecting the public.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Full Council held on 17 July 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

24. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

25. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported on recent functions and events he had attended on behalf of the Council which included the table below and a function relating to the British Empire Medal. The Chairman's Civic Service will be held at St Nicolas Church in Taplow on 15th March 2020 and his charity afternoon tea will be held at the South Buckinghamshire Golf Club on 25th March 2020.

Engagements July 2019-November 2019

Engagement	Date	Chairman/Vice Chairman Attendance
90th Anniversary – Bekonscot Model Village and Railway	03/08/19	Chairman attended
Steam Train Journey & Lunch – Mayor of Windsor & Maidenhead	03/09/19	Chairman attended
Big Night Out – Action4Youth	11/09/19	Chairman attended
Chairman's Charity Golf Day	13/09/19	Chairman attended
People Awards Ceremony – BBC Three Counties Radio	25/09/19	Chairman attended
Mayoral Charity Coffee Morning – Mayor of Windsor & Maidenhead	26/09/19	Chairman attended
Justice Service – High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire	29/09/19	Chairman attended
Musical Evening – Mayor of Newport Pagnell	03/10/19	Chairman attended
50th Anniversary Celebration and Community Outreach Thank you-Samaritans	11/10/19	Chairman attended
Induction of new Vicar – St Peter's Church	16/10/19	Chairman attended
Charity Afternoon Tea – Mayor of Windsor & Maidenhead	17/10/19	Chairman attended
Tour of the Battle of Britain Operations Room (The Bunker) at the former RAF Uxbridge – Mayor of Hillingdon	23/10/19	Chairman attended

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Supper – BCC Cabinet & Chairmen Judges Lodgings, Aylesbury	23/10/19	Chairman & Vice Chairman attended
Presentation of Awards Ceremony	29/10/19	Chairman attended
Gala Dinner Dance	08/11/19	Chairman attended

The Leader informed Members that an additional Cabinet meeting had been arranged to take place on Friday 10 January 2020 at 9am. This was to consider a report on the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule. An additional Council meeting had also been arranged on 15 January 2020 after Planning Committee in respect of this item.

The Acting Chief Executive referred to the forthcoming Parliamentary election which was taking place on 12 December. Polling stations will be open across the district from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. with the count taking place for the Beaconsfield constituency overnight at Capswood. Poll cards were sent to residents last Tuesday. Those residents who wished to register for a postal vote should do so before 5 p.m. on 26 November, whilst proxy vote applications should be made by 5 p.m. on 4 December. As a result of the election, the December Planning Committee will now take place on Tuesday 17 December.

The Acting Chief Executive informed Members that today the Council had been taking part in the Local Government Association's Our Day event which involved sharing via twitter some examples of the work the Council does to support and improve the quality of life of the residents of South Bucks.

26. **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members noted the Minutes of Committee meetings which were included in a supplement pack separate from the main agenda. There were recommendations from the Audit and Standards Committee on 10 July 2019 which were being considered in a separate report.

27. **AMENDMENT TO THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS**

Full Council considered a recommendation from the Audit and Standards Committee on 10 July 2019 to amend paragraph 8 of the Council's Code of Conduct. The Committee considered that this paragraph could be ambiguous in that it refers to decisions and actions taken by Policy Advisory Groups, however they are not decision making bodies and therefore it was recommended that reference to PAGs in paragraph 8 be removed. It was moved by Councillor Hollis and seconded by Councillor Hogan and

RESOLVED

1. That the amended Code of Conduct attached at Appendix 1 of the report be adopted.

2. That the Council's Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary changes to the Constitution, including any consequential amendments, to reflect the adoption of the amended Code.

28. CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no recommendations from Cabinet and Members noted that the last meeting was held on 9 October 2019 and were included in the minute supplement pack.

29. REPORT ON SPECIAL URGENCY

Full Council received a report on the urgent implementation of a decision taken on 25 September 2019 by the Portfolio Holder for Resources on an Inter Authority Agreement for Buckinghamshire County Council Legal Services, as required by Section 4.2 of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

30. VERBAL REPORTS FROM THE LEADER, CABINET MEMBERS OR CHAIRMAN OF A COMMITTEE

There were no verbal reports.

31. QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE

Notice having been given under Council Procedure Rule 10, the following question was put by a Member of the Council. There were no questions from the public.

(Councillor Sangster question)

Will all asset categories transfer to the Unitary and, if so, what assurances will be provided that said assets will be used to benefit the residents of the soon to be former District Council?

The Leader responded that the assets and liabilities of the respective Councils will transfer to the new Council. The Buckinghamshire Council will understand the responsibilities and obligations arising from the transfer of those assets and liabilities. However, the Buckinghamshire Council will manage its assets in the context of its objectives and priorities for the whole of its area.

32. MEMBERS' REPORTS

The meeting received the following members' reports:

- Bucks Health and Social Care Select Committee - 2 July and 19 September 2019
- Report of the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust – 25 September 2019

33. **MOTIONS**

No Notices of Motion had been received.

The meeting terminated at 7.36 pm