

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Wednesday, 13 February 2019, in Jubilee Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council Gatehouse Road Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 11.45 am.

Members Present

Councillor Trevor Egleton (Chairman – South Bucks District Council), Councillor Eric Batts (Vale of White Horse), Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes District Council), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Alan Thompson (South Oxfordshire), Councillor Emma Webster (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Mark Winn (Aylesbury Vale District Council)

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer)

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner), Francis Habgood (Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police), Paul Hammond (Chief Executive, Office of PCC), Ian Thompson (Chief Finance Officer, Office of PCC) and Anthony Stansfeld (Police and Crime Commissioner).

Apologies

Councillor David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Councillor Derek Sharp (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Chiltern District Council), Julia Girling (Independent Member), Councillor Tom Hayes (Oxford City Council), Councillor Sophia James (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Norman MacRae (West Oxfordshire), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Councillor Pavitar Mann (Slough Borough Council), Curtis-James Marshall (Independent Member) and Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council)

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Iain McCracken and Councillor Emma Webster both declared Interests as Members of the Berkshire Fire Authority.

35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 16 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

36 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions submitted.

37 REPORT OF THE BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP

As in previous years, the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel formed a Budget Task & Finish Group to assist in discharging its statutory duty to scrutinise the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley's proposed Council Tax precept for 2019/20.

Councillor Iain McCracken, the Chairman of the Budget Task and Finish Group presented the report. He thanked Ian Thompson and Linda Waters for attending the Group and updating Members on the PCC's draft budget proposals and also Members of the Group for their work.

The Chairman particularly referred to the following points:-

- Precept increase flexibility of up to an additional £24 (Band D equivalent) for all PCCs (or equivalents) in 2019/20.
- £161m additional grant funding – The settlement, including council tax and pension grant, represents an average cash increase (total funding) of 7.1% between 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- New Requirements – The Minister's letter refers to the requirement to "drive efficiency, productivity and effectiveness".
- Forces are being provided with an additional £142.5m pensions grant in addition to the £161m core funding. For Thames Valley this does not cover the full pension's costs. There is a shortfall and hence a balance to be funded locally. In TVP the funding shortfall is £0.7m.
- The PCC has undertaken a short public consultation exercise on the proposed increase in Council Tax and over 8,000 people responded with almost 70% supporting the proposed increase in the Policing precept for Council Tax.
- After funding pay and price rises, the proposed increase in Council Tax enables an investment of around £8.5m in a number of priority policing areas. The PCC has made the following commitments:
 - To improve services to the public through contact management by reducing 101 call handling times (£1.3m) – Additional call-handling staff (around 45) would be recruited to deal with the volume of calls and to improve outcomes to residents
 - To increase frontline policing by recruiting additional officers and staff to respond to increasing crime demand and complexity (£2.5m)
 - To improve investigative capacity and process for complex crimes (£2.2m)
 - To increase the Digital Development Programmes (£2.5m) and increase digital capability by exploiting the modern platforms which have been investing in – This involved increasing the number of laptops for Police Officers, improving Wi-Fi capability in police establishments.
- In accordance with the agreed policy on the use of reserve funding the PCC will continue to utilise the Improvement and Performance (I&P) reserve to fund one-off expenditure contained within the MTFP. It will also support the capital programme and ICT Strategy implementation.
- The revenue budget is balanced in all 4 years (i.e. 2019/20 to 2022/23) with a £24 increase in Band D council tax in 2019/20 followed by 2% per annum in later years. The MTFP provides for inflationary increases and limited investment to address some service and performance issues by increasing resources, both police officers and police staff, alongside investing in the technology to make staff more productive. The investment has only been possible because of

the additional flexibility in the proposed council tax precept.

- The Force continues to prioritise its work on the Productivity Strategy to ensure resources are directed to priority areas and that services are delivered in the most effective and efficient manner. This work focuses the drive for continuous improvement, improved efficiency and alignment of resources with demand. It will continue to release savings in future years in order to address future unquantified demands and provide additional resource to reinvest in priority policing areas
- The current MTFP requires revenue savings of at least £15.1m over the next four years. This is over and above the £101m of cash savings already removed from the base budget in the last eight years (i.e. 2010/11 to 2018/19) meaning that, over the twelve year period in excess of £116m will have been taken out of the base revenue budget.
- Medium Term Capital Plan 2019/20-2022/23 - Following the provisional police grant settlement announcement, an additional £2.1m of development opportunities have been provided for to improve the overall effectiveness of policing. Capital receipts were declining due to the low number of police property assets.
- It was noted that recruitment would be very competitive as all Police Forces would be looking to recruit new police officers. Recruitment and Retention of police officers in Thames Valley was a challenge because of the cost of living in the region.
- Reference was made to the total spend on police vehicles over the four year period being around £13m and it was explained that this programme could be impacted by developments in electric powered cars/ hybrids and also by the proposed increase in police officer numbers.

A recommendation had been put forward which was debated during the next item as follows:-

That the Panel approve the Police and Crime Commissioner's precept for 2019/20 as set out in the OPCC report 'Revenue Estimates 2019/20 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2022/23' subject to satisfactory responses to the questions raised and any other supplementary questions asked at the Panel meeting.

38 SCRUTINY OF THE PROPOSED PRECEPT - QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The PCC responded to the following written questions:-

1. There are around 2.4million residents in the Thames Valley policing region and yet there were only around 8,000 residents who responded to your consultation on the proposed precept. What is the reason for this low response rate?

[I was not aware, until the provisional police grant settlement was released on 13th December 2018, that I would be encouraged by Government to increase council tax by up to £24 for a Band D property in 2019/20. All my financial planning up till that point was based on a £12 increase, as per the previous police finance settlement from 12 months ago.

However, before deciding whether or not to increase council tax by £24 I carried out a short online survey which ran for 3 weeks from 19th December till 9th January. In order to reach as many people as possible the survey in order to reach as many people as possible, it was sent to:

- All users of TVP Alert – at least 82,787 residents
- All town and parish councils
- All councillors from county, unitary and district councils
- All media in the TVP area via a press release

- Regular social media updates via Twitter

In total, 8,031 people voted, of which 5,599 or 69.7% voted yes.

Although this is a relatively small percentage when compared to overall population in the Thames Valley more people voted in this survey, than the one I undertook 12 months ago (6,500) and is also a better response rate than other PCCs have achieved when consulting locally on their council tax increase. I would be interested to know what measures the Panel believe I could have taken to increase the response rate over the festive period.]

2. Will this budget mean that you can deliver the key objectives in your Police and Crime Plan, particularly in relation to the reduction of crime and higher detection rates?

[The additional investment should enable the force to improve its operational performance, particularly in respect of crime reduction and better detection.]

3. How will you holding the new Chief Constable to account on the use of this additional funding? At this early stage, could you give an indication of how the £8.5m of extra investment is going to be used?

[The main areas of additional investment in 2019/20, being funded through the increase in council tax precept are under the following schemes:

- Improved Services to the Public through Contact Management £1.3m - The rise in demand and the complexity of that demand have increased the length of time it takes to assess the threat, harm and risk and ensure every call receives the appropriate response. We will reduce call handling times, particularly for 101 calls, by recruiting additional staff to deal with the additional demand and more complex crime and incidents being reported.
- Increasing Local Front Line Policing and Service Delivery £2.5m - we will recruit additional officers and staff to increase visibility to our communities and respond to increasing crime demand and complexity and the impact (particularly in the areas of mental health and children's safeguarding) of the reduction in the resources of and services provided by other agencies.
- Improved Investigative Capacity and Process for Complex Crimes £2.2m - stretched resources are operating in an increasingly expanding and complex environment with investigations at all levels growing in size and complexity. There has been an impactful increase in organised crime which exploits the vulnerable as well as cyber enabled crime fraud and economic crime. We will recruit more investigators and invest in appropriate new technology and tools.
- Increasing Our Digital Development Programmes £2.5m - we will exploit the modern platforms we have been investing in through the development of operational designed tools, expanding our mobile capability and improving connectivity will allow officers and staff to maximise the use of online digital applications facilitating the fast access and transfer of data, while investing in Intelligence technologies will improve the efficiency of transactional processes.

I will hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery against this investment at my public level 1 meetings and also at my private monthly meetings with the Chief Constable.]

4. One of your commitments from this increase in precept is to increase the number of front line

police officers. What methodology will be used on where in the Thames Valley this extra resource will be deployed?

[The review of the Operating Model and changes to the way that we deliver local policing have highlighted that additional police officers are needed on Local Police Areas. These are needed to support changes in demand and calls for service, avoid removing officers from one area to compensate another and to ensure that the functions at each level are sustainable. This work is being led by ACC Local Policing.]

5. What methods will be used to help with the recruitment and retention of Police Officers in the Thames Valley, particularly in view of the previous difficulties of recruitment and retention in the past?

[Since the end of 2017 when our recruitment and retention problems began increasing a number of measures have been put in place to manage and respond to the situation. Recruitment and retention issues are managed by the Recruitment and Retention Programme board which is chaired by the Director of People and meets monthly. This programme board ensures that the necessary actions are being taken to respond to the issues we are facing. In addition CCMT receives monthly updates on the delivery of our establishment numbers and the actions taken to improve our position, for example increasing the number of intake courses.]

6. Increased investment in technology is earmarked for the Police. In view of the delays with the implementation of the Contact Management Programme and the resultant increased costs, how will you ensure that these future projects come in at budget costs?

[There is always a risk of project and budget over-run when implementing complex business change and/or new technology projects. We will look to minimise this risk through robust project management and good procurement. We created the Optimism Bias reserve 12 months ago for this very purpose. At the moment there is £9m in this earmarked reserve which should be sufficient for all capital schemes in the current 4 year Medium Term Capital Plan.]

7. Does this budget take account of the impact on policing from Brexit including procurement of specialist equipment and services which are coming from EU countries?

[No. We are aware that there are both operational and financial risks associated with Brexit but, at this stage, we have not included any specific financial provision in the budget. Any additional costs that cannot be contained within the annual budget will be funded from general balances.]

8. Is there a deadline for conversion from the current Airwave product to ESMCP?

[This is a Home Office led programme and is currently going through a reset, so dates are still being finalised. Airwave will only be turned off when ESMCP has been fully tested, is operationally effective and has been implemented across the country. The programme within Thames Valley Police is being coordinated regionally by the South Central and South East Programme and is working closely with the national team. They will also explore options to take advantage of products early, where appropriate.]

9. Do you consider that sufficient funding has been set aside for the purchase and implementation of ESMCP and if not,

[Yes, as far as we know, and based on current information coming from Home Office.]

10. What is TVP's financial fall-back position regarding the continual delays in the availability and roll out of ESMCP?

[Use of financial reserves. We are hopeful that the Home Office will not allow this vital operational system to expire without having or implementing appropriate operational solutions.]

The following additional questions were also asked:

- In relation to the extra funding to be allocated for "101 calls", would this funding contribute towards improvements to processes and would there be external expertise brought in? In response the PCC reported that the Contact Management Platform would be receiving £1.3m extra funding which would improve services to the public with an increase in the number of call handlers and an increase in training to enable the efficient reporting of more complex incidents and crimes. Getting recruitment and retention was key as the call handling sector was a competitive sector, so this would be taken into consideration. The Chief Constable responded to a recent media article regarding some Police Forces considering "switching off" the "101" service at night, by assuring the Panel that TVP would not be doing this.
- At a Safer and Stronger Bucks Partnership Board it was reported that there were plans to amalgamate the three Local Police Area Commanders into one. In response it was reported that there were no plans for this at present.
- In relation to Community Safety Partnerships and funding for 2019/20 by the PCC, would there be a commitment beyond this. The PCC reported that he hoped so, however, the budgetary situation did look extremely tight for forthcoming years.
- Reference was made to the increase in the budget for TVP motor vehicle insurance and the PCC explained that insurance for the Police was a challenging market and that TVP was part of a ten Force consortium for motor vehicle insurance.

RESOLVED

That the Panel approve the Police and Crime Commissioner's precept for 2019/20 as set out in the OPCC report 'Revenue Estimates 2019/20 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2022/23' having received satisfactory responses to the questions raised.

39 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel would take place on 12 April 2019 at 11.00am, at Aylesbury Vale District Council Offices.

It was agreed that prior to the Annual meeting of the Panel on 21 June 2019, a consultation take place with those Members appointed to the Panel from Thames Valley local authorities, on preferred future venues.

CHAIRMAN