

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 3rd February, 2017 at Wyvern House, The Drummer, Winsford,
CW7 1AH

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East Councillors H Murray (Chairman), S Edgar and D Brown

Cheshire West & Chester Councillors R Bisset, A Dawson and M Delaney

Halton Councillors N Plumpton Walsh and D Thompson

Warrington Councillors A King and B Maher

Independent Co-optees: Mrs S Hardwick, Mr E Hodgson and Mr R Fousert

Officers: Mr B Reed, Head of Governance and Democratic Services and Mr M Smith, Civic and Administration Manager

Also in attendance: Mr D Keane, Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, Mrs E Lunn, Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr S Pickup, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Mrs J Gill, Cheshire Constabulary.

39 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor J P Findlow (Cheshire East).

40 CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012

There were no declarations of interest.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present wishing to use public speaking time.

42 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2016 be approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of Mr R Fousert to the list of those present.

43 THE COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSED COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT FOR POLICING FOR 2017-18

The Commissioner outlined to the Panel the process that had been followed to develop his proposed Precept for 2017/18. He explained the context in which the Home Office had in December 2016 issued the Provisional Grant Settlement; this showed a 1.4% decrease when compared with 2016/17. He further explained that the Government had imposed a 2% limit on the increase in Council Tax for policing and any proposed increase above that level would require a local referendum. The cost of conducting a referendum across Cheshire was estimated at £1.2m, which would have to be paid for from the policing budget.

The Commissioner explained that in considering the level of the Precept for 2017/18 he had consulted the public, a process that had resulted in approximately 1,500 responses, an increase of 40% over the previous year. Over 60% of those that responded supported an increase of the Precept of up to 2.00%.

The Commissioner recognised that the proposed Precept would not maintain the current budget, whilst at the same time imposing an increased burden on the Council Tax payer. Pressures on the budget included funding the Police pay award, inflation and priority developments. He did pay tribute to the Constabulary for delivering a range of efficiency savings, including efficiencies created by the successful rollout of mobile hand held technology for Officers, the savings in Police time equated to up to 50 additional Officers.

The Commissioner indicated that the level of the proposed Precept would enable the current number of Constabulary funded PCSOs to be maintained. If his budget were adopted the Constabulary would have the highest number of Police Officers since 2012.

In proposing to increase the Police element of Council Tax by 1.99% for a Band D equivalent property from £161.13 to £164.44, the Commissioner indicated that this would provide a balanced budget, which would enable Cheshire Constabulary to protect the people of Cheshire and invest in the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan. In addition the proposed increase in Council Tax reflected the Government's expectations and the outcome of public consultation.

Members of the Panel discussed the detail of the proposed Precept seeking clarification on a number of points from the Commissioner.

Councillor Thompson asked the Commissioner a question relating to Officer numbers, stating that the current number of Officers appeared to be lower than the previous Commissioner had indicated they would be when he set his last budget. Mr Keane noted that central Government had not honoured commitments in relation to funding and that this had impacted on the number of Officers currently in the Cheshire Constabulary. He stressed that in setting a budget and Officer numbers sustainability was extremely important to him.

Councillor King asked the Commissioner about the increased workload for the Constabulary due to Officers becoming more involved in a wider range of community related activities, often due to reduced levels of service delivery in other agencies. The Commissioner recognised that this was an issue and that the nature of Policing was changing. One response was for the Police to work more flexibly with other agencies and for increased levels of collaboration.

Councillor Dawson requested further information on the funding and related consequences for the Constabulary of investigating non-recent sexual abuse cases. The Commissioner agreed to produce a report on these issues for the next meeting of the Panel. He also asked the Commissioner if the budget would adequately provide for the consequences of what appeared to be increased workload in areas such as sexual abuse against children, domestic violence and hate crime. The Commissioner assured the Panel that the budget would cope with this work, with work being reprioritised if necessary. He also indicated that he had approached central Government for additional funding to enable the Constabulary to respond to cases of non-recent sexual abuse.

Councillor Dawson sought clarification from the Commissioner on the number of PCSOs that his budget would support. The Commissioner indicated that the total number of Constabulary and partner funded PCSOs would be 210. Mr Keane offered to write to Councillor Dawson clarifying a number of points that had been raised by e-mail and then discussed at an informal meeting the previous month. He also indicated that any redundancy costs would not impact the revenue budget for 2017/18.

Councillor Dawson asked the Commissioner about the number of staffed Police Stations across Cheshire. The Commissioner indicated that he would shortly be starting a piece of work that would review this and related issues. He was confident that the outcome would be an increase in the number of locations where the public could meet face to face with the Police.

The Vice Chairman asked the Commissioner a question related to the national debate regarding the increased arming of police officers, seeking clarification on the current position of Cheshire Constabulary with regards to this issue. In particular he asked if the substantial costs that such an initiative would incur in terms of training, equipment and security of firearms had been factored into the budget for 2017/18.

The Commissioner responded by saying that the risk of the use of firearms in Cheshire was low, but that the Constabulary did provide support to other Forces. No additional funding had been received, but there was money in the budget for routine training and the replacement of firearms.

The Vice Chairman asked a further question in relation to forensic services, indicating that the Forensic Regulator, Dr Gillian Tully was seeking increased statutory powers because of her concern that the quality of forensic work was putting the integrity of the Criminal Justice System under threat, to the extent that this could result in miscarriages of justice and criminal trials collapsing. She had suggested that because of financial considerations, not all forces were fully committed to meeting even the minimum required standards expected of any reliable forensic science and few would meet the requirement for the digital forensic standards that would come into force in October 2017. Mr Fousert sought clarification that appropriate resources would be available to enable the Constabulary to meet the new digital forensic standards when they came into force in October.

The Commissioner indicated that the standards of forensic services in Cheshire were good, and that the standards set in ISO 17205 were being met. There was scope for wider regional collaboration, but was satisfied that relevant standards

would be continue to be maintained and the cost could be met from the proposed budget.

Councillor Dawson indicated that whilst he supported many elements of the budget, he would be abstaining from the vote over the Precept, as he was not yet satisfied that maximum benefit was being realised from all Police assets. He requested that the Commissioner move quickly with his review of assets, especially where this related to the Constabulary's estate.

RESOLVED

That the Panel support the Commissioner's proposed Precept for 2017/18 without qualification or comment.

44 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Consideration was given to a report that outlined proposals for appointing independent members to serve on the Police and Crime Panel.

The Chairman had recently received the resignation, with effect from 31 March 2017 of Mr Eric Hodgson, whose current term of office ran from 2016 to 2019. The two remaining Independent Members' terms of office would expire in June 2017. Mr Hodgson explained that he had resigned, with regret, due to his being appointed as Chair of a newly created, pan Cheshire Magistrates Bench, which was replacing the current structure where there were three Benches. He explained that it was perceived by some that there could be a possible clash of interests should he continue as a member of the Police and Crime Panel. Mr Hodgson was thanked for the contribution that he had made to the work of the Panel and was asked to serve on the Recruitment Panel that would make recommendations as to the appointment of his replacement together with the two other independent members of the Panel whose terms of office would conclude shortly.

The Panel were of the view that the terms of appointment of independent members should be staggered ensuring that in future one member would be recruited each year.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the Panel appoint a Recruitment Panel made up of Councillors Amanda King and Andrew Dawson together with Mr Eric Hodgson to advise on the most appropriate way to move forward with appointments to the Panel arising from the vacancy following the resignation of Mr Eric Hodgson, and the expiry of the terms of office of the two other independent Members of the Panel.
- (2) That the Panel's Rules of Procedure be amended to incorporate the decision made in September 2015 in relation to the appointment of independent members and that the Head of Governance and Democratic Services be given authority to make such changes to the Rules of Procedure as he considers are necessary to give effect to the wishes of the Panel.

45 FUTURE MEETING DATES

Consideration was given to a report which outlined dates and venues for future meetings of the Panel, together with options for the date of a Confirmation Hearing for the appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

RESOLVED

1. That future meetings of the Police and Crime Panel be held on: -

Friday 24 March 2017 Capesthorne Room, Macclesfield Town Hall

Friday 23 June 2017 Council Chamber, Warrington Town Hall

Friday 22 Sept 2017 Karalius Suite, Halton Stadium

Friday 1 Dec 2017 Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings, Crewe

Friday 2 Feb 2018 Council Chamber, Wyvern House, Winsford

Friday 20 April 2018 Ellesmere Port (venue to be confirmed)

2. That a confirmation hearing for the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner be held on Wednesday 22 February 2017, with officers being requested to seek to secure a suitable venue.

46 SCRUTINY ITEMS

The notes of the meeting of the Management Board held on 4 January 2017 had been circulated to the Panel members in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the notes be noted.

47 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - QUESTIONS FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

A summary of the questions asked of the Commissioner and a summary of the responses are set out below:-

Mrs Hardwick indicated that she still had concerns over the way in which performance statistics were presented, she asked the Commissioner the progress that he was making in developing performance indicators to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The Commissioner updated the Panel on the progress that he was making in translating current performance figures into direct indicators and that these would be in use shortly.

Councillor Thompson raised concerns the issue of parking tickets in parts of Halton. It was noted that Halton was the only Cheshire Borough not to have introduced decriminalised car parking and the Commissioner suggested that the most appropriate way forward would be through a local meeting.

48 WORK PROGRAMME

The work Programme was noted.

49 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel be held on Friday 24 March 2017, in the Capesthorne Room, Town Hall, Macclesfield.

The meeting commenced at 10.10 am and concluded at 12.23 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)