

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

To All Member Authorities

The Panel is set up under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Its role is to scrutinise and support the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire. I present regular reports to Councils on the Panel's work to provide for wider debate on issues of interest. The following summarises the main issues discussed at the Panel meeting of 28 July 2016:

PCC's Annual Report 2015/16

The Panel is legally required to consider, in public, the Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report.

The 2015/16 report detailed the numerous initiatives being pursued under the Commissioner's 'Safer, Fairer, United Communities' strategy

The Commissioner highlighted three areas where progress had been significant:

Mental Health Services – In circumstances where there had not been emergency health service accommodation available for people with mental health difficulties who were in crisis, Staffordshire Police had accommodated the individuals in Police Cells. The Commissioner had acted to address this unsuitable arrangement and, following discussions with the North Staffs Mental Health Trust, their practices had been reviewed. This in turn had led to a 60% reduction in the number of individuals needing Police support.

Police Cadets – Originally established to increase an understanding amongst 14-17 year olds of policing and promoting life skills and confidence for potentially vulnerable young people, the scheme had attracted wider interest amongst that age range. Currently there were around 200 Senior Cadets. It was intended to increase this number to 400.

A Junior Cadet scheme had subsequently been introduced for 7-11 year olds. That scheme involved working with young people (eg in schools) for a defined, short period. To date around 2000 children had taken part.

Transparency Policy – As part of his policy to increase the transparency of the Staffordshire Force, the Commissioner had established the Ethics, Transparency and Audit Panel who looked in detail at particular practices (eg the use of Tasers). The Panel's membership was independent of the Force and were given open access to information.

As part of the 'transparency agenda' Local councils had been commissioned to establish Safer Neighbourhood Panels, giving community representatives the opportunity to directly question the Force on issues/services in their area.

The Panel questioned the Commissioner on a wide range of other issues included in his Annual Report, including the SPACE (youth activity) scheme, the roll out of mobile data technology, Neighbourhood Watch schemes and the recently introduced Smart Alert system.

The major contract with Boeing Defence UK limited was discussed with the Commissioner explaining that the company had been engaged to transform the Force's technology systems to make them fit for the future in terms of both local need and compatibility with national security requirements and the wider Criminal Justice System.

The Commissioner reported his views on the need for complete reform of the Criminal Justice System to both improve the co-ordination between agencies and to achieve better value for money from the funding currently allocated. He acknowledged the extent of cultural change which would be required for multi agency joint working to succeed.

Looking to the future and his second term of office the Commissioner referred to proposals for collaboration between the Police and other emergency services reporting that consultants had been engaged to carry out an analysis of the benefits and risks of a bringing the Staffordshire Police and Fire and Rescue Services together.

Other items considered

The Secretary to the Panel submitted reports on the allocation of Home Office grant for the running of the Panel, the re-appointment of Mr Paul Darby as an Independent member of the Panel, and the number, and handling of complaints received about the Commissioner.

In addition the Commissioners Chief Finance Officer submitted the Revenue Budget 2015./16 Outturn and reported on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Finance related issues debated were:

- the overspend by the Force on staffing (attributed to overtime and agency staff costs)
- underspend on grants by the OPCC (attributed to fewer than expected applications which met the criteria for grants)
- the inclusion in budget assumptions for 2017/18 onwards of a 2% increase per annum in Precept

- the level of Reserves held – considered to be sufficient to meet unforeseen demands for funding whilst maximising monies available for front line service
- the £6.7million funding gap shown for 2019/20

Members' questions to the Commissioner related to Cyber Crime and the possible effects of BREXIT on the Force and the Commissioner's Transformation agenda.

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Frank Chapman

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel Chairman

Staffordshire County Council