

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 Panels work to provide for wider debate on issues of interest. The Panel met on 23 January 2017 when the following issues were discussed:

Police and Crime Commissioner's Draft Budget and Precept 2017/18

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is required to notify the Panel of his proposed Precept by 1 February each year. The Panel has the power to veto the proposed Precept if it considers it to be either too high or too low.

The PCC reported that for 2017/18 he proposed a 1.99% increase in Precept reminding members that throughout his first term of office he hadn't sought any increase in precept as he felt that there were economies and efficiencies to be realised within existing budgets.

The Commissioner was seeking increased revenue via the Precept in order to maintain services at current levels. He highlighted a provisional 1.4% reduction in Home Office grant (equating to £1.488m) and detailed the assumptions made, such as increase in the Council Tax Base and surplus Council Tax revenue, in estimating other funding levels. Reporting on budget pressures for 2017/18 the PCC referred to his continuing Transformation agenda to modernise the Staffordshire Force and equip it to respond to the changing nature of crime, his wish to increase visibility in the Community to give confidence in the Force, and made brief reference to national strategic policing commitments which had to be fulfilled.

Prior to considering the Precept the Panel sought, and received, assurances from the PCC that the proposed Budget and Precept had been based on reliable financial information and that he had confidence in financial management practices in the Force. Assurances had been sought as the External Auditor had issued a 'qualified, except for...' report to the PCC and Chief Constable following the Audit of accounts. That decision related to financial reporting and arrangements for planning effectively. In giving assurances the PCC summarised work carried out by his Office in conjunction with the Force to address financial management practices.

Members questioned a number of elements contained in the proposed Budget including reductions in provision for Force and Staff pay costs with the PCC giving assurances that Police Officer levels were to remain constant. Community Engagement was under review by the Deputy Chief Constable and, to allay concern expressed by some Panel members, he confirmed that the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme would be an important element in future service provision. Responding to

queries on the reduction in budgets in 2017/18 for Premises and Transport costs, the PCC reported that joint working with Kier and the Staffordshire Fire And Rescue Service respectively had realised considerable savings.

The Panel accepted the Budget and did not exercise its veto over the proposed 1.99% increase in precept for 2017/18.

Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020

The Panel also received a report by the PCC on the requirement on him to publish a new Police and Crime Plan following his re-election and to consult the Panel on its contents. Consultation would take place throughout February with a view to publishing a final document by 1 April 2017. The new Plan would continue with the four themes currently included in the Commissioner's Safer, Fairer, United Communities Strategy with a fifth theme to be added relating to 'Modern and Transformed Policing' to reflect the changing challenges facing policing and the modernisation agenda both locally and nationally. The Panel agreed to consider the draft Plan at a special workshop to be arranged for late February 2017.

Confirmation Hearing – Director of Finance and Performance

The Panel held a second meeting to consider the PCC's chosen candidate for the post of Director of Finance and Performance in the OPCC. The Panel is required to consider the professional competence and personal independence of preferred candidates for a number of key posts in the PCC's Office, including the Chief Financial Officer. The CFOs role has ben incorporated into the Director of Finance and Performance post.

The PCC introduced to Panel Mr B Bhakri reporting on his professional qualifications, skills and experience. The Panel questioned Mr Bhakri on his experience of public sector financial management. The Panel supported Mr Bhakri's appointment to the post.

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