

North Yorkshire County Council

Police and Crime Panel

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6 February 2018, commencing at 11.00 am in Meeting Room 3 at County Hall, Northallerton.

Present:-

Councillors: Val Arnold (Ryedale District Council), Michael Chambers MBE (Harrogate Borough Council), Peter Dew (City of York Council), Mel Hobson (Selby District Council), Carl Les (in the Chair) North Yorkshire County Council, Russell Lord (Richmondshire District Council), Peter Madeley (Craven District Council), Ashley Mason (City of York Council), Sandra Turner (Scarborough Borough Council), Peter Wilkinson (Hambleton District Council).

Community Co-opted Members: Santokh Singh Sidhu and Paula Stott.

Julia Mulligan (Police and Crime Commissioner)

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority appointed observers: Councillor Tony Richardson (Vice Chair, NYFRA)

Officers from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner: Fraser Sampson (Interim Chief Executive Officer), Michael Porter (Chief Financial Officer), Will Naylor (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner – present from Item 7) and Tom Thorp (Policy and Scrutiny Manager).

Officers from NYCC: Suzanne Truman (NYCC Finance), Diane Parsons (Panel Secretariat).

Apologies:

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority appointed observers: Councillor Andrew Backhouse (Chair, NYFRA)

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

265. Minutes

Resolved –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2018, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

266. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Val Arnold and Councillor Tony Richardson notified their interest as Members of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority in Item 8 (PCC's local business case regarding governance of the Fire and Rescue Service).

267. Exclusion of the public

Resolved –

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 10 (Closed Session) on the agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006.

268. Public Questions or Statements

The Panel was advised that no notice had been received of any public questions or statements to be made at the meeting. The Chair noted for the record that correspondence had been received by the Panel from Mr P Richardson in respect of Item 7.

269. Progress on Issues Raised by the Panel

Considered -

The report of the Panel Secretariat advising on progress on issues which the Panel has raised at previous meetings and other matters that have arisen since the last meeting and which relate to the work of the Panel.

Diane Parsons advised the Panel that Item 3 of the paper had been actioned by the OPCC in correspondence with Councillor Hobson, since publication of the paperwork.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) wished to note for the Panel that the reference given under Item 2 regarding a forthcoming neighbourhood policing review was incorrect as this will be a survey about neighbourhood policing. It was agreed that further references will therefore be amended as required.

In response to a query from Santokh Sidhu regarding Item 1 (evidential testing for drink driving/journey times), it was agreed that Mr Sidhu will consider in further detail the aspects of this issue that he would like to receive further information on and submit this to the PCC.

Resolved -

That the Panel note the report and the updates or amendments notified.

270. Members' Questions

No questions were put by the Panel Members to the PCC.

271. The PCC's precept proposal for 2018/19

Considered -

The PCC's proposal for the policing precept for 2018/19.

The PCC provided the Panel with some context to her proposal, which sought to raise the precept by £11.50 (Band D property) in 2018/19. The Panel were advised that the money derived from this uplift will be ring-fenced and prioritised on policing operations and that she would like to be completely transparent for the public about how it will be used. The PCC had decided not to pursue an uplift for the full £12, even though the government has afforded PCCs a flexibility to raise to this limit, as she recognised the difficulties people are facing financially. She was, however, keen to keep in mind the needs of the police force and its ability to provide the best service for the public.

Michael Porter outlined that the provisional funding settlement referred to in the paperwork had now been finalised with no change. The Home Office has indicated that it may look to

provide a similar flexibility to PCCs regarding the precept level in 2019/20 but this would come with some attachments. The Home Office wants to see evidence of a serious commitment to improve productivity and efficiency from all forces, including reviewing the use of reserves (particularly where there are forces whose levels remain high). The PCC wished Members too note that while the final government settlement is considerably better than had been anticipated, a significant amount of work will still need to be done with North Yorkshire Police (NYP) to look at how to make it more efficient and savings will still need to be made.

Consequently, the PCC wants to see transformational change delivered across the police force to ensure that it continues to improve its service performance, its ability and flexibility to meet changing demand and to embrace new technology to support this.

Members raised that a large number of respondents did not appear to favour an increase to the precept above £10, when correlating responses received both prior to and following the incorporation of a question into the survey on this point. The PCC highlighted that following the inclusion of the question regarding the added flexibility to raise by up to £12, the public advised in the majority that they would be happy to pay this. The question was incorporated as soon as the government had announced its decision on this.

The Panel emphasised the need for the PCC to be clear for the public about where the uplift from the precept increase will be invested. The PCC intends to invest the increase back into the public's priorities and key areas supporting delivery of the Police and Crime Plan. This will include further investment in areas such as the Force Control Room and victims' services. The PCC was clear that efficiency savings will pay for improved wage increases and other inflationary pressures; these will not be funded via the uplift. These savings will be across estates, ICT and through careful management of staffing vacancies. It was noted by Members that the PCC's Decision Notice sets out in detail her plans for use of the precept uplift and that the PCC will also consider developing a leaflet for the public on the same.

The PCC will be asking the force to bid for funding for investment going forward. This will require a clear business case and demonstration of how greater productivity and efficiency will be delivered.

Members asked about the level of general reserves and contingency planning around this; the key concern being that reserves will be rather low at £4.6m by the end of 2018/19. Michael Porter advised the Panel that while the general reserves are about as low as he would want them to go, they reflect the risk levels to the organisation, which are also currently low. If savings aren't delivered then the PCC would need to re-assess the position. The Home Office is also looking for reserves across all forces to not be excessive. The Panel were reassured that reserves will be kept under close review and that there are earmarked funding streams to help deal with unforeseen external circumstances, such as major incidents.

The PCC's attention was drawn to the significant decrease to the Capital Programme in 2018/19 and also the additional borrowing of £1m forecasted. Michael Porter acknowledged that there has been slippage to delivery of the Capital Programme and underspend to particular programmes or budgets. He will be looking to NYP to be much clearer in some areas going forward about why certain budgets are required and this will include working within a reduced Capital Programme. The PCC wished the Panel to note that NYP has been relatively fortunate in terms of its financial position in recent years and has not been compelled to transform its delivery, but the force will be challenged now to get better at managing projects and how it budgets. It was noted that borrowing is not undertaken generally for specific items and that it will only be sustainable to apply external borrowing against estates investments.

Members considered workforce planning and warranted officer numbers, including appropriate planning for officer retirement and avoidance of reliance on temporary staff to fill gaps. The Panel were advised of the processes in place to manage staff handovers and ensure adequate planning for officer retirement. The PCC was clear that the changing nature of crime requires that planning for the future should look at the skillset needed within the force to tackle particular threats and risks. This may not necessarily require an increase in the number of warranted officers. Members also asked about the methodology to be used in relation to making savings through increased staffing vacancies and how this will be managed. Mr Porter explained that every vacancy across the force will be looked at and the need for those particular posts. The assessment will be needs-based and will look at whether the force can absorb holding certain vacancies over a period of time. Statutory posts will be appointed to. This is seen as an interim position until the force is better placed to undertake the planned transformational change.

The Panel challenged the target of delivering £7.5m in savings over the next three years but noted that the plans for achieving this indicated that it was an attainable target for the force. In particular, it was noted that NYP is an outlier in comparison with other similar forces in relation to areas such as its admin costs and rank structure (a shift pattern review has been underway). In looking at achieving greater value for money, significant work will be done to review expenditure and ensure that the organisation is transforming sufficiently to be able to work more effectively and link up with systems better. Members emphasised the need for clear communications with staff and officers during a period of considerable transformational change for the force.

A couple of Members asked about the operating costs for the PCC's office and how the PCC would ensure that these would be tightly managed going forward in the same way that NYP would be expected to demonstrate. The Panel were advised that there will be additional staffing costs within the next two years as a result of changes to the handling of police complaints but that the exact posts (and numbers) to deal with this had not been determined. A further briefing on the complaints work will be coming to the Panel in the spring. Tom Thorp commented that the North Yorkshire OPCC is the smallest office in the region when compared with its peers. He further commented that while it is an office which needs to adequately support a proactive PCC, efforts are taken to ensure that spend on areas such as travel is minimised to ensure that expenditure is focussed on supporting greater scrutiny. The PCC wished Members to note her gratitude for Tom Thorp's particular support to help embed the recent staffing restructure in terms of enhancing the PCC's ability to focus on providing challenge to NYP.

Further to a query from a Member, Michael Porter clarified that the reduction in spend on projects relates to the fact that there have been a significant number of projects running in recent months, such as the HQ move, which are now coming to an end.

Resolved -

The Police and Crime Panel accepted the PCC's proposal for an increase to the policing precept of £11.50 in 2018/19 (Band D property).

272. PCC's local business case regarding governance of the Fire and Rescue Services (standing item)

The PCC advised the Panel that there was nothing further to update at this stage as regards progress of the Home Office review of the local business case.

273. Freedom of Information Act correspondence handling

Considered –

The PCC's report on the handling of Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) handling.

Further to a Member's question, Fraser Sampson outlined how NYP and the OPCC are have been preparing for the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) at the end of May 2018 and also considered the impact of the removal of the fee for Subject Access Requests (SARs). Mr Sampson indicated that it would be difficult to predict the level of demand for SARs but would expect that considerably more people will be aware that they're entitled to make a SAR, particularly in the early stages. However, there has been a two-year lead-in to preparing the ground for these changes so work has been underway to improve procedures. A key change is that a Data Protection Officer must be appointed and two such posts will be required for NYP and the OPCC. Mr Sampson advised that he has also invited the internal auditors to come in and help assess preparedness for GDPR; a report will be brought to the next Audit Committee meeting on this.

Resolved -

That the Panel note the written and verbal updates provided on FoIA correspondence handling.

274. Closed Session

Further to the notification given under Item 3, the Chair invited all parties, other than Panel Members and officers supporting the Panel, to leave and the Panel went into closed session to receive an update report regarding the substantive Chief Executive Officer and confidential information in relation to Item 9 (Freedom of Information Act correspondence handling).

275. Work Programme

Considered -

The report of the Panel Secretariat, inviting the Panel to consider its Work Programme.

Diane Parsons highlighted that following correspondence with the PCC's office, further consideration will need to be given to the proposed date of the precept meeting in February 2019. This is to ensure that there is sufficient time given to both preparation and review of the necessary paperwork. Members will be advised once a date has been confirmed.

Resolved -

That the Panel note the report provided.

The meeting concluded at 12:50pm.

DP