

DYFED POWYS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Friday, 25 January 2019

PRESENT: Councillor A. Lloyd-Jones (Chair);

Carmarthenshire County Council Members:

Councillors K. Howell and J. Jones;

Ceredigion County Council Members:

Councillors L. Edwards and K. Evans;

Pembrokeshire County Council Members:

Councillor S. Joseph;

Powys County Council Members:

Councillors D. Evans and L. George;

Independent Members:

Prof. I. Roffe;

Mrs. Helen Thomas;

Also in attendance:

Councillor J. Prosser (Carmarthenshire County Council);

In attendance from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner:

Mr. D. Llywelyn, Police and Crime Commissioner;

Ms. B. Peatling, Chief Financial Officer;

Mrs. C. Morgans, Chief of Staff;

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Edgecombe, Legal Services Manager;

L. Morris, Senior Press Officer;

K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer;

J. Laimann, Assistant Democratic Services Officer;

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 11.15 am - 2.40 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND PERSONAL MATTERS

Apologies for absences were received from Councillors Michael James (Pembrokeshire County Council), William Powell (Powys County Council) and Robert Summons (Pembrokeshire County Council).

The Chair extended condolences to Councillors Lloyd Edwards (Ceredigion County Council) and Jim Jones (Carmarthenshire County Council).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interests.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 16th NOVEMBER 2018

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel held on the 16th November 2018 be signed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (IF ANY)

4.1. Minute 4.4 - Agenda Item, Police Accountability Board

In response to a question from the Panel, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that the data analysis for the recent staff survey had been completed and results could be made available to the Panel shortly.

4.2. Minute 5 - Agenda Item, Question to the Panel by A.T., Carmarthenshire

With regard to the Panel's query to the Home Office, Members were advised that the Home Office would not comment in principle on an increase in independent membership. Instead, the Home Office had stated that the Panel would have to recruit additional Co-opted Members and then seek Home Office approval for individual appointments. The Lead Officer advised that, since the Panel would not be able to change its membership arrangements without the Home Office's approval in principle, this would mean putting individuals through a recruitment process without knowing whether they might be appointed.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that Independent Membership be scheduled as an agenda item for the next Panel meeting.

5. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM PANEL MEMBERS TO THE COMMISSIONER

5.1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LES GEORGE

Question by Councillor Les George:

"During the course of attendance to many activities in my ward I am approached regularly about serious and disturbing incidents of rural crime.

It is reported to me that there are continuous rustling of livestock, theft of all terrain vehicles, increasing incidents of fly tipping and the worrying of sheep, especially this time of year. These problems alone are blighting the lives of decent people in the rural areas but find they are now also experiencing serious vandalism on an organised basis from groups who are opposed to livestock farming.

As Commissioner can you give the Panel assurances that you will make sufficient funds available to the Chief Constable to tackle these problems? What steps will you take to ensure the Chief Constable and his officers give these problems high priority?"

Response by the Police and Crime Commissioner:

The Commissioner advised that the Chief Constable was the Lead for Wales in relation to wildlife crime and rural affairs and had a thorough understanding of the issues in question. They had launched a Rural Crime Strategy in 2017 which focussed on improving the two-way communication with rural communities in response to an identified trend of underreporting to the Police Force. The Force had also scheduled strategic rural crime meetings in the four unitary authorities that Panel Members were welcome to attend. In addition, the Force had established a full-time specialist rural crime team in December 2018, which was working alongside the experienced North Wales team. The Commissioner

emphasised that the Force would develop further collaboration that would hopefully extend to an all-Wales response to rural crime. A recent success of the Dyfed-Powys Rural Crime Team, which had been publicised on social media, was the uncovering of an illegal slaughter facility with the help of good community intelligence. The Commissioner concluded that he was assured that the Force's response to rural crime had improved recently but was seeking further improvements in the future.

In response to Panel queries, the Commissioner advised that the Rural Crime Team was engaging with local farming communities on crime prevention and mental health support.

5.2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR WILLIAM POWELL

It was noted that as Councillor William Powell had sent his apologies he would be provided with a written response to his question. The Chair read out the question on his behalf.

Question by Councillor William Powell:

“Irrespective of how the Brexit situation evolves over the next few weeks and months, several senior police figures have warned of the potential for a significant impact to be felt by police forces across the UK including disruption to transport and public services and the risk of civil unrest. What are you doing as Commissioner to ensure that Dyfed-Powys Police is as prepared as it can be for all eventualities, whether they be a ‘no-deal Brexit’ at the end of March, a delay of Brexit to some future date, a further referendum or even the cancellation of Brexit?”

Response by the Police and Crime Commissioner:

The Commissioner responded that he received regular updates from the temporary Assistant Chief Constable who chaired the local resilience forum. The forum was undertaking specific Brexit planning exercises with partners. The Commissioner advised that Brexit preparations were especially crucial with regard to the Fishguard and Pembroke ports. He stated that the Force Gold Group and the Tasking and Coordinating Groups were ensuring that specific resources were available during the critical period post 29th March 2019 and a Force mobilization plan was in place. The Commissioner concluded he was reassured that the Force was doing everything it could to prepare for Brexit. The Force was also feeding into planning at National Coordination Centre and had received funding from the Centre for a Chief Inspector post to coordinate Brexit preparations. The Commissioner acknowledged that there was a danger for resources to be taken out of Dyfed-Powys and redistributed to the South East as part of a mutual aid relationship. He would be liaising with the Chief Constable on lobbying activities in relation to this issue.

5.3. QUESTION FROM PROFESSOR IAN ROFFE

Question by Professor Ian Roffe:

“Recent reports have indicated that some commissioners are orienting resources towards low-level crime in response to public demand, at the expense of more serious and organised crime. Can the Commissioner provide assurance that the resource allocation for Dyfed Powys is suitably balanced?”

Response by the Police and Crime Commissioner:

The Commissioner advised that press reports alleging that commissioners were ignoring serious and organised crime were mainly generated by an interview with the Director General of the National Crime Agency. This had been followed up by a letter to PCCs in which the Director General clarified that the headline “bears no reflection” to the interview she gave. The Director General was of the opinion that serious and organised crime was often hidden and that lower-level crime could therefore be perceived by the public as having a higher priority and that law enforcement was “not staying ahead of the curve”.

The Commissioner advised that while it was ultimately within the Chief Constable’s remit to decide how resources were utilised, protecting communities from serious harm and disrupting serious and organised crime was one of the key priorities set out in his Police and Crime Plan (Priority 3 refers). The Commissioner stated further that he was meeting quarterly with Community Safety Partnership Managers and that his staff was being informed on the Force’s approach towards these issues in Serious and Organised Crime Boards in the four unitary authorities. The Commissioner advised that an update on the Force’s demand profile work, which analysed where resources were deployed, had reassured him that resources were balanced appropriately. The Chief Officer Group would be continuing to assess this balance in consultation with Senior Officers and further iterations of the demand work would be taking place within the calendar year.

6. QUESTION ON NOTICE TO THE COMMISSIONER FROM P.D.R., CARMARTHENSHIRE

Question by P.D.R:

“When I recently tried to complain to Dyfed-Powys Police about a multimillion pound fraud being carried on in the area I was directed to Action Fraud. Does this mean that Dyfed-Powys Police lack the resources to investigate such crimes? What is the Commissioner doing to ensure Dyfed-Powys Police is being properly resourced to protect residents from such frauds?”

Response by the Police and Crime Commissioner:

The Commissioner clarified that the forwarding of fraud reports to Action Fraud for analysis and assessment was a national policy requirement and therefore did not reflect any lack of resources to investigate such crimes in Dyfed-Powys. He advised that the majority of fraud offences were committed from outside of the Dyfed-Powys area and, once reported to Action Fraud, were either investigated on a national level or forwarded to the host force of the perpetrators. Dyfed-Powys Police received only report packages in relation to fraud offences that were committed from within the Dyfed-Powys area. The Commissioner advised that he had frequent discussions with the Chief Constable in relation to the resourcing of the Fraud Team and that he had used monies from forfeiture and proceeds of crime activity to fund additional posts within the fraud investigation unit. In addition, he had supported the Operation Signature team, which was working alongside the banking industry and had safeguarded over £1m in the Dyfed-Powys area within twelve months of being in place.

7. FAIR FUNDING FOR RURAL POLICING

The Panel considered a report on funding for rural policing which had been prepared by the National Rural Crime Network in conjunction with the University of

Plymouth. The Panel was advised that the National Rural Crime Network was an organisation of Police and Crime Commissioners and other rural stakeholders aiming to improve rural policing and the extant funding arrangements by central government. The report considered how different funding formulas impacted on different forces and made recommendations regarding future funding arrangements. The Panel was advised that the report had been included on the agenda to provide background information in preparation to its discussion of the Police Precept (Agenda Item 8).

The Commissioner pointed out that while he was supportive of the findings the report was somewhat dated, relying on data from 2015-16. He advised that a National Audit Office report on police funding, published in September 2018, might provide more up-to-date information in relation to the Precept. He suggested that both reports were very critical of the Home Office's current approach to funding rural policing and policing more generally.

In relation to comments about non-crime police services such as safeguarding vulnerable individuals, the Commissioner advised that these services were potentially at risk under current funding settlements.

Several comments were made suggesting that the report showed the extant funding formula to be inadequate and that representations should be made to the Home Office to highlight this and to ensure the Comprehensive Spending Review and the review of the police funding formula were informed by independent expertise. It was suggested that other Welsh Police and Crime Panels could be invited to become involved. The Commissioner stated that his Office would support any activity in this regard and was already engaged in similar lobbying work through the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners. He advised that a representation from the Panel would be timely as the Comprehensive Spending Review was currently at Stage 1, with outcomes expected this autumn, and the revised funding formula was currently at State 2, with outcomes expected the year after.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

7.1. That the Fair Funding for Rural Policing report be noted;

7.2. That a representation be made to the Home Office highlighting the problems with current funding arrangements for rural policing and encouraging that the Comprehensive Spending Review and the review of the police funding formula be informed by independent expertise.

8. POLICE PRECEPT

The Commissioner presented to the Panel his report on the proposed police precept for 2019/20. The Panel was advised that it could make the decision to either approve, reject, or veto the proposed precept at the meeting and thereafter had to issue a report on its decision to the Commissioner. The decision to approve or reject could be made by a simple majority while a veto vote had to be supported by a two-third majority of the entire Panel membership. This would imply that all ten Panel Members present at the meeting would have to support the veto. It was further advised that if the Panel chose to veto, the Commissioner would not be able to issue the proposed precept and would have to publish a response to the Panel's report, indicating a different proposed precept, by the 15th February 2019.

The Panel would not be able to veto the revised proposed precept but could only decide to approve or reject it.

The Commissioner stated that the Mid Term Financial Plan assumed a reduction of £7.9m in the central grant but ultimately relied on a critical unknown figure as a new funding formula would come into effect in 2021/22. He emphasized that the Force had lost £14m (22%) in core funding since the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review and currently had the lowest precept levels in Wales. He advised that a previous decision to cut the precept by 5% and then freeze the precept had resulted in the use of reserves which had recently faced significant additional pressures from the Home Office pay settlement and the costs incurred in the investigation into the Llangammarch Wells fire.

The Commissioner stated that he had consulted with the public and discussed in detail the Chief Constable's plans for staffing levels, police services and future investment needs in agreeing the Force's budget for 2019/20. He advised that the core components of the budget had led to his recommendation of a police precept of £55.247m with an average Band D council tax property paying £248.56, a level that was 10.7% higher than the 2018/19 level. If accepted by the Panel, this would result in a total budget of £106.897m when combined with central and local funding.

The Commissioner's statement was followed by a presentation on the Panel's Scrutiny of the 2019/20 Police Precept report by the Panel's financial lead.

Amongst the questions/issues raised on the Commissioner's report were the following:

- It was stated that the Commissioner's proposal was recommending a very large precept increase which would have to be borne by a relatively small population of precept payers. The comparatively low wages and low economic activity in the Dyfed-Powys area might make it difficult for some individuals to raise this additional income.
- A comment was made that the use of Band D as a sample band was misleading as the average band for properties in Powys was higher and some people would have to pay £56 per year in addition.
- In response to a query on the potential impacts of a lower precept rate, the Commissioner advised that this could result in a freeze of staff recruitment, a reduction of Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers and a review of the capital investment programme into police stations.
- Several comments were made proposing that the precept increase was acceptable in order to maintain good police services and safety in the Dyfed-Powys area, especially considering recent pressures on reserves.

RESOLVED that

- 8.1. The Commissioner's proposal to increase the Dyfed-Powys Police's precept by 10.7% for 2019/20 be endorsed;**
- 8.2. That a note be send to the press explaining the reasoning behind the Panel's decision.**

9. DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMISSIONER

The Panel received, for information, a report detailing the decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner for the period 12th November 2018 - 15th January 2019.

In response to a request, the Commissioner agreed to provide a report on the newly established Youth Forum and the new youth engagement approach as soon as meaningful data was available. He advised that a likely timeframe for this would be six months.

With regard to procurement, the Commissioner advised that contracts were awarded locally where possible and Dyfed-Powys Police was using the Sell2Wales procurement process. Pressures to prioritise a value-for-money approach were however increasing in the light of recent cuts. The Commissioner agreed to liaise with the Finance Gold Group to try to provide data on how much of the Force's expenditures were spent in the Dyfed-Powys area.

In response to a query, the Commissioner advised that Dyfed-Powys Police had its own Legal Services Team but occasionally used external specialist legal advice.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. HMICFRS CRIME DATA REPORT

The Panel considered a report on crime data integrity from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Resource Services, which was published in December 2018. The Panel was advised that the report was based on the examination of crime reports from October 2017 – March 2018. The report found that, although crime recording by the Force had overall improved since the last inspection in 2014, further improvement were required in areas including sexual offences, public order and violence offences, in particular domestic abuse.

The Commissioner advised that the Force had made considerable moves towards improving crime recording and was aiming for an overall crime recording rate of 95%. It would be considering to put out to tender a new record management system for the Force within the next twelve months.

A query was raised questioning the report's statement that the Chief Officer team was relatively new given that Chief Officers would have been in place for at least 18 months at the time of the inspection. The Commissioner advised that, while this reflected a wider trend of Chief Officers retiring earlier across all forces in England and Wales, he would not describe an 18-month old team as new. In response to a question, the Commissioner confirmed that changes to annual allowances in relation to the pension pot were a main driver of the trend towards earlier retirement.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be noted.

CHAIR

DATE