



**MINUTES of
Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting as the
CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE
18 NOVEMBER 2015**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor A S Fluker
Vice-Chairman	Councillor S J Savage
Councillors	E L Bamford, H M Bass and M W Helm
Substitute Member	Councillor Mrs M E Thompson
In attendance	Councillors M F L Durham and Miss M R Lewis

603. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed Mr Nick Alston, Police Crime Commissioner, Superintendent Steve Ditchburn and Chief Inspector Alan Cook from Essex Police to the meeting.

604. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION NOTICE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P A Channer and R P F Dewick. In accordance with notice duly given it was noted that Councillor Mrs M E Thompson was attending as a substitute for Councillor Mrs Channer.

605. MINUTES

These were circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 October 2015 be received and confirmed.

606. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Councillor S J Savage declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a substitute Member on the Police and Crime Panel and at the election was Sub-Agent for Mr Alston.

Councillor A S Fluker advised, in the interest of openness and transparency, that in the past he had rented property to the Police Authority, but did not at this present time.

607. ESSEX POLICE REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Essex Police Review Task and Finish Working Group (the Working Group) updating Members on work undertaken by the Working Group. At this point, the Chairman thanked Members of the Working Group for their support.

In presenting the report, the Director of Customers and Community drew Members' attention to an addendum which had been circulated at the meeting and detailed a suggested change to the recommendations allowing the matter to be reported to the Council prior to Christmas. The Chairman proposed that recommendation (i) be accepted and this was agreed.

The report provided background information regarding the work of the Working Group and notes of its previous meetings were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 detailed documentation provided by the PCC and Chief Constable relating to the review of Policing in Essex. Essex Police performance summaries were attached as Appendix 3 to the report.

Following consideration the Working Group had identified a number of themes to explore with the attending representatives and these were set out in Appendix 4. It was noted that the questions were designed to understand the thinking behind the decision to make changes to policing within the District.

The Committee then received a presentation from Mr Alston, the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC) assisted by Superintendent Ditchburn. The presentation set out the proposed changes to Policing including the impact these would have on the District, including the closure of the Southminster Police Station. Members were advised of 'Public Contact' a new initiative being put in place by April 2016 which will enable residents to report crime online and register and search for lost / found property.

Following the presentation Members raised a number of questions following the themes outlined in Appendix 4 to the report and in response, the following information was provided by the PCC and Police representatives:

Theme 1 - Understanding financial background:

Members sought to understand what steps the PCC had taken to address the budget shortfall, understand funding arrangements and why the property estate had a large maintenance backlog.

- Essex Police had one of the lowest precepts across the country and unlike some other Authorities had no reserves and had a very efficient back office. Members were advised of the efficiency savings made when Essex and Kent Police combined their departments responsible for HR, Estates, Finance etc. in 2009.
- It was noted that the Government was looking to revise the current funding formula for the central government grant received and it was hoped that Essex would benefit from this. In response to a question regarding the PCC attending a meeting of the Home Affairs Select Committee where this matter was discussed, the PCC advised that he had not attended and that attendance

was via invitation of the Chairman. Members were advised that the PCC had made representation in respect of this to the Home Secretary and Home Office. It was suggested that this Committee would approach the Chairman of the Select Committee to request an invite for the PCC.

- The PCC highlighted some of the work and a review of estates that had been undertaken. The importance in investing in property and technology to ensure the robustness of the Police force in the future was noted.

Theme 2 – Understanding the Rationale Used for the Proposed Changes Within the Maldon District

Members sought assurance that the proposed changes to policing in the District took account of the rural and peninsular nature of the area when deciding upon the level of resource allocated.

- Superintendent Ditchburn referred to the reduction in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and advised how visibility would have to be through other means. There would be seven PCSOs serving Chelmsford and Maldon and it would be important to prioritise how this resource was utilised. The work of the active citizen / special constabulary was also highlighted.
- It was noted that following the proposed changes the number of Officers serving the District would remain unchanged with Maldon seeing a slight increase. Chief Inspector Cook advised that the Police would be focussing on the organisation and needs of the public which would be assisted through changes to how current staffing was utilised.
- Local policing priorities would continue to be identified through consultation with key partners and future proposals will give opportunity to build co-located teams of partners and the Police.
- Members were advised that the proposed changes would not affect responses to emergency incidents and detailed of these were given.
- The PCC advised Members that Maldon had the lowest crime rate in the Country and one of the few places where there had been a reduction. Resources had been reassigned to address those areas such as sexual crimes where a serious increase had been seen. There was also a need to move towards more Community Safety Hubs in the future and to pull together a number of agencies working together to keep residents safe and protected. It was noted that the Police were dealing with a number of mental health issues and there was need for a holistic view of vulnerable people and how the Police could join up with other partnership organisations to address the issues.
- It was acknowledged that the detection rate highlighted from data figures needed improvement and the PCC referred to the need for the continued reporting of crime by local residents etc.

The Chairman suggested that the Police should look to publicise more its good news stories.

Theme 3 – Consideration of alternatives to reducing front line Policing

- The PCC highlighted the joint work with Kent Police, the joined up approach to procurement which has delivered real savings with particular reference made to the vehicle fleet.

- It was noted that Essex makes a contribution towards running costs of air operations which was part of a National Service. Members were advised of the exact cost savings.

Theme 4 – Use of Technology

- The PCC highlighted how the Police was modernising through the use of technology the way it communicated with the public and in turn the public could contact the Police and report crime etc. Reference was made to the Districts ageing population some whom may not have access to technology and in response the PCC advised that access would also be available via the telephone and face to face at Police stations.
- In response to a question regarding Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) Cameras funded for use on the Dengie, Chief Inspector Cook advised that they had been purchased and arrangements were currently underway with regards to where they would be sited.

Theme 5 – Impact of Changes within the Community

Members sought an explanation into the actual level of policing resources within the District under the proposal.

- It was confirmed that the Community Policy Team was likely to be located at Chelmsford Police Station and the challenge for Chief Inspector Cook was to ensure that the Maldon District saw a share of that resource.
- Members were advised that local response teams would be based in Maldon.
- It was noted that some of the duties undertaken by the Community Policing Team would, in time, migrate to the Council. This was linked to changes in legislation relating to anti-social behaviour.
- Members sought clarification on the recently announced Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service Parish Safety and Home Safety scheme based on the use of volunteers, but those present were not able to provide any additional information.

Theme 6 – Lack of formal consultation and input from Partners prior to the announcement of changes

Members sought assurance that the proposed changes to policing in the District took into account local views.

- In response to a question regarding consulting partners on the changes, the PCC explained that the Police had no obligation to consult partners and the key issue was consulting with those affected staff. He agreed that the timing was not ideal recognising the impact this had on partner organisations and there had been a delay in the announcement due to the sensitivity of the matter.
- The PCC advised he was keen to meet with partner organisations to explain the rational and reasons behind the changes proposed.
- In response to a question regarding the work that the PCC had undertaken during the time he had been in office, the PCC highlighted some of the achievements made and referred to the excellent police staff and the work they did. The PCC informed the Committee that he was responsible to the Police and Crime Panel and should there be any dissatisfaction with his performance the Panel should be informed.

Theme 7 – Public Confidence in Policing within the Maldon District

- Superintendent Ditchburn outlined the work the Police was undertaking with Partner organisations to engage more with them and the future vision.
- Reference was made to anti-social behaviour in respect of vehicles and in response to discussions Chief Inspector Cook advised that the Police did run specific operations along with other partnership organisations to address this which may result in vehicles being seized and taken off the road.
- In response to a question the PCC outlined what the ‘Athena’ policing technology was, the work involved with introduction of the system and benefits seen. It was noted that Kent, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire were due to go live in 2016.

The Chairman thanked the PCC, Superintendent Ditchburn and Chief Inspector Cook for attending the meeting and the information they provided.

The Chairman then referred to the addendum and proposed that recommendation (iii) be supported. This was agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) that Members note the background work undertaken by the Essex Police Task and Finish Working Group in preparation for the scrutiny scheduled for 18 November;
- (ii) that the Director of Customers and Community in consultation with the Essex Police Task and Finish Working Group reports to Council in December with conclusions and resulting recommendations following the scrutiny exercise.

There being no other items of business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4:37pm.

**A S FLUKER
CHAIRMAN**

This page has been purposely left blank