

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

28 February 2017

PRESENT:

Gateshead Council	Councillors J McElroy (Chair) and J McClurey
Newcastle City Council	Councillor J Robinson
North Tyneside Council	Councillor T Mulvenna
South Tyneside Council	Councillor J Welsh
Sunderland City Council	Councillor H Trueman
Independent Co-opted Members	J Guy and S Isaacson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

Dame V Baird QC	- Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria (PCC)
E Snaith	- Chief Executive
M Tait	- Chief Finance Officer

Gateshead Council

M Harrison	- Legal, Democratic and Property Services
B Wilson	- Democratic Services

APOLOGIES: Councillors N Kemp (Newcastle City Council), C Burdis (North Tyneside Council), I Hutchinson and L Simpson (Northumberland County Council), G Kilgour (South Tyneside Council) and P Watson (Sunderland City Council)

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 7 February 2017 be approved as a correct record subject to minute 42 being amended to: it was agreed that the risk of further reductions in funding was inevitable, therefore, the risk definition should be amended to high.

47. FEEDBACK FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

The Chair reported that at a recent joint meeting of Gateshead Council's Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing Boards it was agreed that a letter be sent to the Chancellor regarding the concern at the low duty on low value cider.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted

48. DRAFT POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2017-21

The PCC has a statutory role to issue a Police and Crime Plan within the financial year in which each ordinary election is held. The PCC's draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-21 - Building Safer Communities and Effective Justice was presented to the Panel.

In line with the statutory requirements, the plan must include:

- The PCC's police and crime objectives
- The policing the Chief Constable is to provide
- The financial and other resources the PCC will make available to the Chief Constable to provide policing
- How the Chief Constable will report to the PCC about policing
- How the Chief Constable's performance will be measured
- Information about any crime and disorder reduction grants to be made by the PCC and any conditions made.

The role of the Police and Crime Panel is to review the draft Police and Crime Plan and make a report and recommendations for regard by the PCC.

The draft Police and Crime Plan has been shaped by a wide range of influences including:

- Public consultation
- Northumbria Police performance
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary inspection findings
- Northumbria Police strategic assessment
- National Policing Vision and Strategic Policing Requirement
- Victim services funding priorities
- Consultation meetings with key strategic partners
- Community Safety Partnerships strategic assessments
- PCC Advisory Groups and Victims Panel
- Students consultation
- Police and Crime Panel consultation

Following an analysis of the findings from the consultation process, the proposed Northumbria Police and Crime Plan priorities for 2017-21 are:

- Domestic and sexual abuse
- Putting victims first
- Effective criminal justice system
- Reducing anti-social behaviour
- Tackling crime
- Community confidence

The Panel raised the following issues:-

It was commented that it was a good plan and the priorities fitted in with the Council's priorities. However, because of the Government funding cuts, there will be less resources in Sunderland to tackle anti-social behaviour. It was asked if there were any grants available that could be given to the Community Safety Partnerships. The PCC replied that her budget has also been cut but there was a lot of joint working being done with the Community Safety Partnerships and bids for extra funding were being made whenever possible.

Reference has been made in the section in the plan on reducing anti- social behaviour to drunken youths. It was suggested that this should also include adults and the PCC agreed.

It was commented that drug issues were only lightly mentioned in the plan. Drug related crime can cross all of the six proposed priorities in the policing plan. It was the general public perception that drugs were a problem and they need to read the plan and be assured that it was being addressed. The role of the Serious and Organised Crime Unit could also be mentioned. The PCC replied that cutting drug use and the crime that is a consequence was included in the tackling crime section of the plan. The concern about legal highs has been addressed successfully and there were a number of initiatives with partners working with people under the influence of drugs. The police regularly target key seizures of drugs and arrest dealers, etc. The PCC agreed to look at this section again.

It was suggested that an explanation of restorative justice which was mentioned under putting victims first in the plan could be given. There have been some good examples of how it had worked but it was supposed to be victim led but it can be a long process. The PCC agreed to look at this.

The work of the Court Observers Panel was included in the plan in the effective criminal justice system section. Now that the panel's report had been submitted, it could be mentioned that the scrutiny work will continue with a new focus on specialist domestic violence courts. The PCC agreed to add this into the plan.

The former Probation Service used to be very active partners in the drug and alcohol projects and it was asked what the position was now. The PCC replied that there were new arrangements with the Community Rehabilitation Company with a different model.

The survey findings stated that adults wanted reducing crime as one of their top priorities. It was considered that this was what the public think that the police were there to do. However, in the plan and as one of the proposed priorities it was tackling crime. There should be some consistency. The PCC replied that tackling crime was more aspirational as it included early intervention, etc. and was not just about arrests but she would at this.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the draft Police and Crime Plan 2017-21 be noted.
 - (ii) That the PCC consider the Panel's comments on the draft plan and a revised plan be sent to Members for a final review.

- (iii) That a report be sent to the PCC recommending that the format and content of the plan and its objections be supported, subject to the minor points of clarification raised.

48. THEMED REPORT – SEEING IS BELIEVING – THE NORTHUMBRIA COURT OBSERVERS PANEL REPORT ON 30 RAPE TRIALS 2015-16

In accordance with minute 44(ii), the PCC presented a report on the findings and recommendations of the Court Observers Panel.

Following an advertisement in the press and on social media for volunteers and interviews by a panel, twelve people were recruited and trained to be part of the Northumbria Court Observers Panel.

Using a matrix of agreed questions which followed the course of a rape trial and focussed on key stages and likely key issues, the panel members worked, on a rota basis, usually in pairs to observe thirty rape trials.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

It was asked if there had been any similar exercises in other areas and what would be happening now with the report. The PCC replied that she was not aware of this having been done before. The findings and recommendations in the Court Observers Panel final report will be shared with all the relevant agencies and organisations.

It was commented that it was disappointing that the existing protections for victims under Section 41 were not being properly applied without any consequences. It was also worrying that the victim's previous sexual history was being brought up in Court. In the 25 resolved cases observed by the Panel, there were 19 acquittals. The PCC replied that there could be complex issues in all the cases and there was nothing that the observers saw that can be a cause of the acquittal.

It was surprising that there was no scrutiny or data on the actions of the Courts similar to that produced by the Court Observers Panel. It was suggested that as the judges knew they were being observed, it could have influenced their behaviour. It was also asked if there was any feedback on the trials from the victims involved. Could the juries not be trained before a case on the rape myths, etc in anticipation of what might be brought up? The PCC replied that there was no feedback from the victims as they receive lifelong anonymity. The observers stayed separate from the trial proceedings so that there was no risk of them being involved in the outcome. The judges will have received a lot of training and it was their role to direct the juries in regard to the rape myths, etc.

It was stated that the prosecution could also do more to address the rape myths when they gather enough evidence to put their case. The Court Observers Panel's report should be published as soon as possible to get its message across. The PCC replied that some of the cases observed were well run. The report was to be issued quickly. There was also the psychological effect on the victim following acquittals as they can feel humiliated and think that it was all their fault and they let themselves down.

It was asked what the PCC expected the various agencies and organisations to do with the report. The PCC replied that the report has been sent to the judiciary and Crown Prosecution Service to talk through locally and try and change the practice of how Section 41 was applied. Nationally it has been sent to the Lord Chancellor and Shadow Solicitor General for them to consider improvements that could be made.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the report be noted.
 - (ii) That the Panel be kept informed with the developments of the report.
 - (iii) That the PCC thank the Members of the Court Observers Panel for their good work on behalf of the Panel.

49. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – UPDATE REPORT - JANUARY 2017

In accordance with the agreed procedure, an update report about the complaints and purported complaints against the PCC and every conduct matter recorded by the Monitoring Officer for January 2017 was submitted.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

50. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 25 April 2017 at 2.00pm