



NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

15 January 2019

PRESENT:

Gateshead Council	Councillors A Douglas and S Hawkins
Newcastle City Council	Councillors H Rahman and K Webster
North Tyneside Council	Councillor T Mulvenna
Northumberland County Council	Councillors S Davey and J Riddle
South Tyneside Council	Councillors G Kilgour and J Welsh
Sunderland City Council	Councillor M Mordey
Independent Co-opted Members	Mrs J Guy and Mr 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)
R Durham	- Chief of Staff
M Tait	- Chief Finance Officer
H Murphy	- Business Intelligence Manager, Northumbria Police

Gateshead Council

D Hill	- Legal and Democratic Services
B Wilson	- Democratic Services

APOLOGIES: Councillors C Burdis (North Tyneside Council) and G Miller (Sunderland City Council)

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 23 October 2018 be approved as a correct record.

28. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE FIRE AND CRIME PANELS

The Panel previously agreed its commitment to the National Association of Police Fire and Crime Panels, subject to further information on the National Association's costs being provided, Minute 59 – 2018/19, and that Councillor J Welsh represent the Panel on the National Association.

The National Association has agreed an annual subscription of £500 to support its work, to be funded from the Home Office grant paid to the Police and Crime Panels' host Authorities. Some Police and Crime Panels requested confirmation that this use of the Home Office grant was legitimate and appropriate as the grant agreement states that it can only be applied to "eligible expenditure". Payments that support activity intended to influence or attempt to influence Parliament, Government or political parties, or attempting to influence the awarding or renewal of contracts and grants or attempting to influence legislative or regulatory action are not "eligible expenditure".

The National Association suggested that the Rules of the National Association could be revised to ensure that its activities did not fall outside "eligible expenditure" and this was sent to the Home Office in July 2018.

The Home Office considers that the use of grant to pay the National Association's subscription is not within the scope of the grant agreement. If paid, it would be a breach of the grant agreement and would likely be unlawful and the Home Office would be entitled to refuse to pay expenses claims attributed to the National Association under the grant agreement.

The money paid under the grant agreement must be used to enable the Panel to carry out its statutory functions and responsibilities set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. These are focussed on scrutiny of the relevant Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and do not extend out of the PCC's police area. There is no statutory function on the Panel to be a member of a representative body such as the one proposed.

The Home Office believes that the functions and services provided to support effective local scrutiny and develop the capability of Panels to scrutinise the decisions and actions of PCCs should be provided by the Local Government Association as the sector body for Panels. To claim Home Office grant for the provision of sector services that should already be the responsibility of the sector body potentially raises issues about double-funding of these functions.

Whilst the Home Office response does not prevent the formation of the National Association, it provides a constraint in respect of if or how some of the Association's agreed terms of reference can be delivered. The National Association considers that the restrictive wording of the 2011 Act should be relaxed in order for Panels to make the best use of the Home Office grant. The Chair of the National Association has asked for Panels' support by writing to the Policing Minister and Home Secretary requesting a change to the current Home Office grant conditions that allows Panels greater flexibility in the use of the grant for Police and Crime Panel related purpose, which may be outside of their respective policing area.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the six constituent Councils be asked to pay the Panel's National Association annual subscription of £500.
 - (ii) That details of what the other Members of the National Association have done regarding the annual subscription be sought.

29. FEEDBACK FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Councillor Welsh reported that she had attended the Annual Conference for Police and Crime Panels at the Warwick Conference Centre on 12 November 2018. At the National Association's Annual General Meeting also held at the conference, she was appointed to the Executive Board, the Association's constitution and expense policy were agreed and the subscription funding issue with the Home Office was discussed.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

30. DELIVERY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN – APRIL – NOVEMBER 2018: THRESHOLDS AND PERFORMANCE

The Panel considered thresholds and performance information relating to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan for April to November 2018.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

The PCC reported that the national charge rates for rape offences had reduced in the last five years. Although the Northumbria charge rate had increased to 7%, it was still under the threshold rate of 9%. The force has redeveloped and improved its rape and serious sexual offences improvement plan.

It was good to see the improved response times for 101 calls with reduced average answer times and increased answer rates and this was very positive.

It was considered that the neighbourhood teams do a fantastic job and should be commended for the work that they do. There was concern about the investigative pressures on the neighbourhood officers and an onus on the victims of crime to provide evidence. It was replied that the force had implemented a programme of work to raise investigative standards and to improve the allocation of crimes for investigation. A number of police officers have been provided with body videos to immediately capture evidence.

It was asked if the cancelled sexual offences affected the victims. It was replied that this was a technicality eg. if it was found that the offence was committed in another force area or the offence had been changed. The information needs to be verified before it can be cancelled. There was no impact on the victims.

There was concern that the police attendance rates at incidents with vulnerable victims were above the threshold. Also, the satisfaction levels for victims of crime was 77% which indicated that 23% were not satisfied. This should be looked at.

Reference was made to the analysis of victim surveys and the identified actions that the police could do to improve the victim's experience. It was hoped that there was an action plan to improve this that the PCC could measure the force against. It was replied that the issues had regularly been raised with police officers and this would continue to be done.

It was considered that the percentage for unpaid work of 46% for out of Court disposals was quite low and action should be taken to try and make this more effective. It was replied that this was part of an independent evaluation which was due to report in March 2019.

The increase in racist and homophobic offences was disappointing and it was asked if the PCC's advisory groups had been consulted on this. The PCC replied that they have not been able to suggest anything that was not already being considered.

It was disappointing that Newcastle and Northumberland local authority areas were ranked 14th out of 15 when compared to the Most Similar Groups and it was asked why the other four local authority areas were doing better. The PCC replied that this should be closely scrutinised.

It was suggested that the hate crime figures should be broken down per race and types of hate crime in the local authority areas so that the Councils can help to address these concerns.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That the force's rape and serious sexual offences improvement plan be suggested as a themed topic for discussion at future Panel meetings.
 - (iii) That the force's programme of work to raise investigative standards be suggested as a themed topic for discussion at future Panel meetings.
 - (iv) That the hate crime figures broken down per race and types of hate crime in the local authority areas be provided.

31. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – QUARTERLY REPORT TO DECEMBER 2018

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 the quarter ended December 2018 was submitted.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

32. POLICE GRANT SETTLEMENT 2019/20 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2019/20 - 2022/23

The Chief Finance Officer gave a presentation on the police grant settlement 2019/20 and medium term financial strategy 2019/20 - 2022/23 which included: an

overview of the provisional police grant settlement 2019/20, context of the Northumbria precept, context of resourcing level reductions, police grant settlement 2019/20 headlines, efficiencies and key messages and provisional settlement precept considerations.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

It was extremely disappointing that the Government continues to reduce its funding for policing and the north and north east were the worst funded areas.

It was asked if the additional precept flexibility increase of up to £24 for 2019/20 would be used to fund more police officers. The PCC replied that she was asking the public for their support to the increase in the precept as outlined. She would then look to optimise the funding available and this could include the provision of more police officers. The Government has only agreed to fund the additional pension fund costs for one year, so clarity was needed on how it was to be funded in future years.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

33. THEMED TOPICS

The following issues have been suggested as possible themed topics for discussion at future Panel meetings:

- (a) How the local Community Safety Partnerships' plans and priorities are considered in relation to the PCC's Police and Crime Plan priorities.
- (b) How the PCC and the police are working with their partners and Councils to tackle environmental crime.
- (c) Details of the police operations being carried out and what they entail.
- (d) The force's rape and serious sexual offences improvement plan.
- (e) The force's programme of work to raise investigative standards.

RESOLVED - (i) That (a) above be agreed as the themed topic for the Panel's next meeting.

(ii) That (b) above be dealt with as a report to the Panel.

34. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 5 February 2019 at 2.00pm