



NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Virtual Meeting held on 8 December 2020

PRESENT:

Gateshead Council	Councillor A Douglas (Chair)
Newcastle City Council	Councillors C Penny-Evans and K Webster
North Tyneside Council	Councillors J Mole and T Mulvenna
Northumberland County Council	Councillor M Swinburn
South Tyneside Council	Councillor J Welsh
Sunderland City Council	Councillors D MacKnight and P Stewart
Independent Co-opted Member	Mrs J Guy

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

K McGuinness	- Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria
R Durham	- Chief of Staff and Monitoring officer
M Tait	- Chief Finance Officer
A Pearson	- Director of Planning and Delivery
P Godden	- Head of Corporate Development, Northumbria Police
D Garrigan	- Business Intelligence Manager, Northumbria Police

Gateshead Council

G Morton	- Representing the Clerk to the Panel
B Wilson	- Democratic Services

APOLOGIES: Councillors S Hawkins (Gateshead Council) and J Riddle (Northumberland County Council)

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

29. FEEDBACK FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

There were no national and regional events reported.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

30. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER – OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2020

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 Office in October - November 2020 was submitted.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

31. DELIVERY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN – QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2020

The Panel considered the key performance areas and crime tables at force and local authority level relating to the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan for July to September 2020.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

The number of 999 and 101 calls had reduced by 11%. It was thought that these may have increased because of the reporting of Covid regulation breaches. The PCC replied that more contact with the force was being made online which had impacted on the number of calls received.

There was concern about the increase in hate crime. The PCC replied that the force was working with the community to build better relations and increase reporting and awareness of why hate crime was not acceptable.

Although the number of 101 calls answered had increased from 84% to 92%, there had been less calls, it had taken longer to answer them and 8% had not been answered. Also, some information was only given in percentages and numbers should also be provided. The provision of additional data would be looked at and call handling performance could be a themed topic for a future meeting. The call centre staff may also have been reduced because of absences due to Covid.

Whilst 89% of calls were correctly assessed for threat, harm, risk and vulnerability, 11% were not. Although some areas had improved, the PCC was asked if she was satisfied that the force was focused on the HMIC/PEEL observations on protecting vulnerable people. The PCC had asked the force to focus on the observations and she was pleased with how it had dealt with them, identified issues and provided training. The force would be revisited as part of the inspection process.

It was asked how the number of sexual offences and domestic abuse during lockdowns compared with other forces. The PCC reported that the numbers were similar to other forces. A lot of pro-active work had been done during the lockdowns to identify those at risk with campaigns and visits to schools, etc.

It was asked if the Most Similar Group comparisons shown for the Area Command figures could also be included in the forcewide figures. This information was to be provided.

The increase in anti-social behaviour was disappointing but because of Covid this was not a true picture. The force had done a lot of excellent work and the public satisfaction figures remain high. The police had worked closely with the Universities to address issues with students and Covid regulation breaches. The PCC was to pass on the comments to the force. It had been a very difficult for the police to deal with the Covid situation and she had been pleased with the force's approach.

Victim satisfaction levels in regard to police follow up action in some areas required improvement. The PCC replied that she had identified this issue and was working with the force to address it.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That call handling performance be considered as a themed topic for a future meeting.
 - (iii) That Members raise any detailed questions they have on the performance report before the meeting so that it can be considered by the PCC and a response provided.

32. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER REPORT

The PCC presented her report which covered the following:-

Covid update
Fighting crime
Recruitment
Preventing crime
White ribbon day
Operation Payback
'Drive' launches to tackle abusive behaviour

The Panel raised the following issues:-

It was asked if there had been an increase in the number police recruits from the BME community. The PCC replied that there was still a lot of work to be done to improve the numbers recruited but she was pleased with the progress that had been made.

A Member asked about the required criteria to join the force and this was to be sent to her.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

33. STATEMENTS OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20 AND THE EXTERNAL AUDITORS CONCLUSIONS

The 2019/20 Statement of Accounts were published by the PCC and the Chief Constable on 27 and 30 November 2020 respectively along with the External Auditor's Completion Report and opinion. They were prepared in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20 and in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards.

The 2019/20 Group revenue budget was £280.082m. Net revenue expenditure of £277.379 million for the year reflects an underspend of £2.703 million.

The 2019/20 approved budget included a planned transfer to earmarked reserves of £4m to manage specific risks identified over the medium term. Of this amount, £2.6m will meet the future shortfall for the national Emergency Services Network implementation in Northumbria and £1.4m will provide the balance of £3.4m to manage the increased cost of police officer pensions for one year only if the full cost was not met by Government on a permanent basis.

The outturn position allowed the planned transfer to reserves of £4m to take place. In addition, it included a further transfer to reserves of £2.703m. £0.305m was transferred to the OPCC Innovation Reserve to fund emergency response Covid-19 grants in May 2020. £1m was held in the general reserve to meet the unfunded costs of Covid-19 for Northumbria in 2020/21. The balance was pre-planned to be held in the general reserve to support the 2020/21 budget by front-loading police officer recruitment above the target for police uplift in Northumbria.

The final 2020/21 outturn position was consistent with the plans set out in the PCC's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24.

Regulations require public bodies to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) that provides an assessment of the adequacy of the governance arrangements and their effectiveness. This separate statement accompanies the Statement of Account for each body. The PCC and Chief Constable Governance Monitoring Group have undertaken a review of the governance and internal control arrangements and have prepared an AGS for each body. These were reported to, and scrutinised by, the Joint Independent Audit Committee on 16 November 2020 and subsequently authorised by the PCC and Chief Constable. The process did not identify any weaknesses in the governance arrangements.

The audit of the Statements of Accounts and Annual Governance Statements for both the PCC and Chief Constable was now complete.

However, there was an 'Emphasis of Matter' item included in the audit opinion from the external auditor's work to gain assurance in respect of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). This related to a material valuation uncertainty clause included by the Pension Fund's Property Investment Manager in some of their March 2020 property valuation reports, due to the possible impact of Covid-19. The outbreak of Covid-19 has had a significant impact on global financial markets. The valuation uncertainty clause means that a higher degree of caution should be attached to valuations of unquoted property assets than would normally be the case. Approximately 9% of LGPS pension fund assets are held in property. The audit opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

The external auditor Mazars has issued an unqualified opinion, without modification, on both the Statements of Accounts. The unqualified Value for Money conclusion also confirms that both organisations have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in their use of resources.

The Panel raised the following issue:-

The PCC commented that around £140m had been lost since 2010. A Member considered that the budget reports should be from 2012 when the PCC took

responsibility and not from 2010. The PCC stated that she would continue to use 2010 because that was when austerity and the major impact on the police started. The Member objected to this and reiterated that it should be from 2012 when the PCC was elected. The Chair stated that it was the PCC's prerogative to use the financial records she wanted to in her reports and this was supported by two other Members of the Panel.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the preparation of the 2019/20 Statements of Accounts and Annual Governance Statements be noted.
 - (ii) That the 2019/20 financial outturn position be noted.
 - (iii) That the arrangements for the scrutiny and certification, leading to the publication of the final Statements by 30 November 2020 be noted.
 - (iv) That the issuing of an unqualified opinion, without modification on the Statements of Accounts and Value for Money assessments for both the PCC and Chief Constable be noted.

Mrs Guy declared a personal and non pecuniary interest in the above matter because she is a Member of the Joint Independent Audit Committee.

34. THEMED REPORT – FUNDING THE POLICE SERVICE

The Chief Finance Officer gave a presentation which included: where police funding came from, the 2020/21 Police Settlement, core grant funding, force level allocations, police allocation formula, force level allocations, how Northumbria Police 2020/21 funding is spent, reserves treatment, capital budgets, investment, budget setting timeline and Spending Review 2020.

The Panel raised the following issue:-

It was considered wrong that the police service funding was only provided on a year to year basis. The provision of funding on a 3, 5 or 10 year basis was required to enable longer term planning and funding arrangements for the police to tackle and prevent crime instead of time limited funding because of how important and significant policing was.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That the Panel's views on the current funding arrangements be outlined to the PCC.

35. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 2 February 2021 at 2.00pm