



NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

6 February 2024

PRESENT:

Gateshead Council	Councillors A Douglas (Chair) and P Maughan
Newcastle City Council	Councillors P Lovatt and J Sathian
North Tyneside Council	Councillor C Johnson
Northumberland County Council	Councillor G Stewart
South Tyneside Council	Councillor J Welsh
Sunderland City Council	Councillor P Stewart
Independent Co-opted Member	Mr K Kundi

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

K McGuinness	- Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria (PCC)
R Durham	- Chief of Staff
A Pearson	- Director of Planning and Delivery
K Laing	- Chief Finance Officer

Gateshead Council

T Briton	- Representing the Clerk to the Panel
B Wilson	- Democratic Services

APOLOGIES: Councillors T Mulvenna ((North Tyneside Council), C Horncastle (Northumberland County Council), C Rowntree (Sunderland City Council) and Mr J Klajn

26. MEMBERSHIP OF THE NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Councillor Carole Burdis, who represented North Tyneside Council on the Panel, sadly passed away on 15 January 2024. A Minute's silence was held in memory of Councillor Burdis.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

28. FEEDBACK FROM NATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

Councillor Welsh gave an update on the National Association of Police Fire and Crime Panels.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

29. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The term of office of the Panel's current Independent Members ends in May 2024.

All of the constituent Councils will be requested to place the advert for the appointment of the Panel's Independent Members on their websites and to circulate the advert to relevant partners, organisations and individuals who might be interested in applying for the position.

It was proposed that the Clerk should be authorised, following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel, to finalise the timetable for the appointment process. It is also suggested that the Chair, Vice Chair and another Member of the Panel should form a Group to shortlist the applicants and to undertake the subsequent interviews. The Group will then recommend its preferred candidate for appointment to the Panel which will make the final decision.

RESOLVED - That the proposed arrangements for the appointment process for the Independent Member positions be approved.

30. FINANCE UPDATE

The PCC reported that the Government's 2024/25 police grant settlement had only recently been confirmed. There was no help for inflation, significant efficiency savings will need to be made and Northumbria had lost £148m during austerity although this had not impacted frontline services.

Mr K Laing, the PCC's Chief Finance Officer, gave a verbal presentation on financial planning 2024/25, budget setting/priority based budgeting process, the police settlement in regard to Northumbria and precept consultation 2024/25.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

Reference was made to temporary officers. It was replied that the officers would replace those that had retired or transferred to other forces. Additional officers under the Police Uplift Programme were also being applied for. The force still had 400 less officers than in 2010.

It was asked if there were to be new buildings or others refurbished and whether new technology was included. It was replied that a review of the estates strategy

was being undertaken to ensure the estate was fit for purpose and sustainable and this took into account new technology, etc.

The PCC and Northumberland County Council were in discussions in regard to the Hexham police station and house but no solution had yet been found.

31. PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2024/25

In accordance with Schedule 5 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the PCC notified the Panel of the proposed 2024/25 Council Tax precept.

The proposed 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets and a review of the 2023/24 budget position were submitted.

The Government's proposed 2024/25 precept referendum limit enables PCCs to increase precepts by up to £13 per year for a Band D property. The PCC has considered the overall funding made available to the force and the impact any increase will have on households. The PCC's proposal for 2024/25 is, therefore, to increase the precept by £13 per year for a Band D property, an increase of 7.7% and approximately 108p per month. This will give an additional and recurring £5.384m contribution to resources.

The PCC stated that the budget shortfall would be increased if she did not increase the precept by £13 per year for a Band D property. Public consultation on the 2024/25 proposed precept had been undertaken through telephone and online surveys. 74% of all respondents supported an increase in the precept to prevent cuts to frontline policing. 62% supported the 7.7% increase which allowed greater investment in frontline policing. The precept increase will allow Northumbria Police to introduce a force wide motorbike Anti-social Behaviour Unit and to safeguard and hire 30 new investigators, including digital forensic specialists. It will potentially reopen new stations or introduce new public contact points following a review into increased openings and avoid the need for further cuts to the frontline police budget.

The Panel raised the following issues:-

Following 14 years of austerity the burden of funding on local people was increasing. Whilst there has been an increase in Government funding there was still a very difficult financial position.

The potential to reopen some police stations to the public was welcomed. The PCC explained that 4 stations were initially involved before an assessment on whether the scheme could be extended would be assessed. It had been a very difficult decision to close the stations to the public and this was now being reviewed.

The PCC gave further information on the proposal to introduce a force wide motorbike Anti-social Behaviour Unit.

Reference was made to the force using the recovery of proceeds of crime to generate funding. The PCC replied that the proposal to hire 30 new investigators would bring in more proceeds of crime funding. Some of this funding has been reinvested into community grants for local projects to prevent crime.

It was suggested that the bikes confiscated by the police could be recycled to raise funds. This was an operational issue and a lot were illegal bikes. The public was satisfied when the bikes which had blighted their area were crushed.

It was asked where the additional officers being recruited would be based. The PCC replied that it took 3 years before the new officers were fully operational, therefore, it was difficult to say where they would be placed. This would be a decision for the Chief Constable.

RESOLVED - That the Panel issue a report to the PCC that it accepts the PCC's proposal to increase the precept by £13 per year for a Band D property, an increase of 7.7%.

32. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 19 March 2024 at 2.00pm.

33. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2024/25

The following schedule of meetings for 2024/25 to be held in the Gateshead Civic Centre was proposed:-

Tuesday, 4 June 2024 at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 23 July 2024 at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 22 October 2024 at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 10 December 2024 at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 4 February 2025 at 2.00pm
Tuesday, 18 March 2025 at 2.00pm

RESOLVED - That the 2024/25 schedule of meetings as outlined be agreed.