

Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 31st January 2024

Present:

Chair

Councillor Jackie Oakes, Rossendale Borough Council

Committee Members

Councillor Quesir Mahmood, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Chorley Borough Council

Councillor Chris Dixon, Fylde Borough Council

Councillor Matthew Lee, Fylde Borough Council

Councillor Peter Edwards , Hyndburn Borough Council

Councillor Michael Green, Lancashire County Council

Councillor Catherine Armistead, Lancaster City Council

Councillor Mark Townsend, Burnley Borough Council

Councillor David Whipp, Pendle Borough Council

Councillor Pat Varty, Preston City Council

Councillor Jan Alcock, Ribble Valley Borough Council

Councillor James Flannery, South Ribble Borough Council

Councillor Gareth Dowling, West Lancs Borough Council

Councillor Roger Berry, Wyre Borough Council

Councillor Peter Le Marinel, Wyre Borough Council

Richard Glover, Independent Co-opted Member

Miranda Carruthers Watt, Independent Co-opted Member

Also in attendance

- Andrew Snowden, Police and Crime Commissioner
- Andrew Pratt, Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner
- Angela Harrison, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Steve Freeman, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Asad Laher, Secretary
- Phil Llewellyn, Democratic & Scrutiny Lead

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Councillor Jackie Oakes, welcomed all to the meeting, apologies had been received from Councillors Armistead and Hunter.

It was noted that the Minutes of the last meeting would be submitted to the next ordinary Panel meeting, but Asad Laher advised that subsequent to discussions on membership of the Panel at the last meeting, it had been confirmed that Cllr Mark

Townsend would continue as Burnley BC's representative, and therefore the Panel Membership remained the same.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

3. Recruitment of Chief Constable

A report was submitted informing the Police and Crime Panel of the retirement of the current Chief Constable (CC), Christopher Rowley. It provided detail on the timescales and process for the recruitment of a replacement permanent Chief Constable.

The Police and Crime Panel were required to hold a Confirmation Hearing to review the proposed appointment and then submit a report to the Police and Crime Commissioner on whether the appointment should be made. The report set out in broad terms the recruitment timetable for the recruitment of the Chief Constable. Under legislation the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had to appoint an independent member to be part of the appointments panel. Their role was to ensure the appointments process was conducted in line with the principles of merit, fairness and openness, and the successful candidate was selected on merit. They were required to submit a report to the Police and Crime Panel to be considered at the confirmation hearing. The Commissioner had also invited the Chair and Vice-Chair to independently observe the recruitment process.

Members of the Panel commented on the recruitment process, highlighting the need for continuity going forwards, particularly in light of potential changes as a result of the PCC Elections, which could mean a change of both CC and PCC at virtually the same time, with the appointment of the right candidate being crucial. Members also highlighted the several changes of Chief Constable in recent years in Lancashire.

The PCC gave assurances about the use of core competences as set out by the College of Policing and also advised that the newly launched Targeted Operating Model (TOM) would help ensure the direction of policing in Lancashire, whilst noting that there was a limited talent pool for such appointments, and also that once police staff had reached 30 years service they were worse off in terms of their pension if they continued to work, which meant that senior figures tended to retire in their early 50s, and that this was a something that needed to be looked at nationally.

The PCC and Panel Members placed on record their appreciation for the dedicated service of the CC, in particular his positive contributions to Lancashire as CC over the last few years.

RESOLVED –

- I) Note the content of the report and agree to organise a Confirmation Hearing on 4 March 2024 to enable the Panel to review the recruitment process in accordance with legislation.
- II) Agree the proposal as set out in 2.7 of the report (involvement of Chair and Vice Chair in observing the recruitment process).

4. Police and Crime Commissioner's Budget 2024-25

The Commissioner outlined his report which set out the forecast for the Police and Crime budgets in Lancashire for 2024/2025 and proposals in relation to the Council Tax Precept.

The report identified the current provisional funding position for 2024/25 and also identified the cost pressures that had emerged, savings required and investment needed for policing in Lancashire. The impact of the proposals for the 2024/25 budget were identified in an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The report referred to the Government announcement on 14th December 2023 for the Provisional Police Grant Settlement. Lancashire had been allocated police grant of £244.600m. This increase was in addition to the permanent additional funding provided in 2023/24 of £8.399m to support the 7% pay award for police officers from September 2023.

The Commissioner outlined cost pressures of £25.244m, and savings of £5.932m. Referring to the assumption that Council Tax base in Lancashire would increase by 1.5% in 2024/25, it was therefore proposed to increase the Council Tax precept by £11.95 for a Band D property in 2024/25.

The PCC also reported on the use of Reserves, and on engagement with the public in respect of his budget proposals for 2024/25.

Members of the Panel then asked a number of questions and made comments on the Commissioner's proposals, the Commissioner responded to the comments and questions, advising:

- Issues with Border areas/Call Centres/delayed responses – the PCC agreed to look into the issues and provide a briefing in response.
- Council Tax increasing whilst the Government were cutting taxes- Several Members referred to another increase in Council Tax, whilst at the same time the Government was promoting tax cuts, and felt that the PCC should have explored other options to help reduce the percentage Council Tax increase. In response, the Commissioner stated that there was nothing new about Council Tax being funded by both the core grant and local funding, whilst acknowledging comments from Panel Members about the low Council Tax base, particularly in East Lancashire, but advised that there was some funding

each year that helped to alleviate this, although the formula was now around 20 years old.

- An issue relating to a victim in South Ribble that had taken 7 years so far and was still not resolved – The Commissioner was aware of this case and referred to delays with IOPC cases, stating that the situation was unacceptable and that he would continue to pick this matter up.
- Sufficiency of investment into Digital Investigations of £200k- The PCC advised that these were specialist roles, in high demand, which were also hard to recruit to, and that only a small team was required.
- ‘Conservative’ saving targets and low use of Reserves- The Commissioner referred to the TOM and the savings already delivered, and there may be more to come, with the PCC advising that the targets were achievable and that these could be achieved without disruptions.
- Engagement with the public on deployment of Neighbourhood Teams – The PCC advised that this was at the CC’s discretion, and the best engagement was where local teams spoke to residents and where people could see outcomes on a day to day basis.
- Issues with Children’s Homes/missing person searches for children from outside the area, was funding available for this? The PCC advised that there was no additional money available in such cases, and referred to similar issues with HMOs, with some people on probation not funded, and unfortunately there was no easy answers to these issues.
- Would the Equality Impact Assessment (E.I.A) referred to available to view? The Chief Executive agreed to check, but indicated that this should be available on the Lancashire Constabulary website.

Panel Members then moved to the vote. In agreeing the recommendations by majority vote, the Panel requested that the official letter sent back to the PCC referred to the concerns of Members that the funding of the Police should not keep falling on residents each year, whilst at the same time the Government was cutting taxes, which it was felt was a case of moving one tax to another.

RESOLVED –

That the Police and Crime Panel:

- Note the details of the 2024/25 provisional police finance settlement, cost pressures and investments and the impact on Lancashire's budget;
- Approve the Commissioner's proposal to increase the council tax precept by £11.95 (4.75%) for a Band D property in 2024/25;

- Make arrangements to ensure that a formal written response to the proposals is sent to the Commissioner by 8th February 2024.
- Note the draft capital investment programme for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29;
- Note the position of the Commissioner's reserves in 2024/25 and future years.

5. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The meeting scheduled in case of the Precept not being agreed (on 14th February 2024) was now not required, so the next meeting of the Panel would be held at 4pmm on Monday 4th March 2024.

Signed.....Chair
2024