

Minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2018

Present: John Francis (Chairman)

Attendance

Syed Hussain	Paul Snape
Trevor Johnson	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman)
Jason Jones	Victoria Wilson
Kyle Robinson	Mike Worthington

Also in attendance: Matthew Ellis (Police and Crime Commissioner), County Councillor Bryan Jones (Hednesford and Rawnsley), Gareth Morgan (Chief Constable Staffordshire Police) and David Williams (Chairman, Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel)

Apologies: Natasha Pullen

PART ONE

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the Select Committee meeting held on 5 March 2018

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee held on 5 March 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

3. Questions to the PCC and the Chief Constable

At their 15 January 2018 Select Committee concerns were raised over a perceived rise in crime and lack of both Police Officers and/or PCSOs. After that meeting Members considered the issues within their areas and the details included in the 6 February PCC's Public Meeting. The concerns raised were included in a list of questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable (CC). The Chairman now welcomed the CC Gareth Morgan, and the PCC Matthew Ellis, and thanked them for agreeing to address the concerns raised by Select Committee Members.

The PCC felt that most of the questions raised were operational and therefore more appropriately addressed by the Chief Constable.

Before addressing these questions the Chief Constable informed Members that the responses needed to be seen in the current context that there were 27% less police officers in 2018 than in 2010. The PCC reminded Members that since 2013 the loss of police officers had been less and that an extra 70 new police officers were being introduced. However the Chief Constable wished Members to note that there were

currently a quarter less police officers than in 2010 and felt that to judge policing on visibility was unfair and didn't take account of the many other areas of work they necessarily undertake.

The questions were then taken in turn and answered by the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner as follows:

Contact Services

Call Handling - why has there been a decrease in the number of non-emergency calls?

Answer: There were a range of reasons for this, but most likely as a result of call back arrangements for 101 calls, which reduced the numbers of repeat 101 calls and consequently gave a reduction in 101 calls.

Emergency 999 calls - 1.2% of emergency 999 calls were recorded as having been abandoned and Members requested an explanation of what 1.2% represented in figures.

Answer: 1.2% represented 1860 calls a year.

101 calls - what percentages of 101 calls were abandoned and, of this total, Members asked how many were re-contacted using the Netcall system.

Answer: This was 8.6% which equated to 30,000 calls a year.

Incident Resources (where officers had attended) – changes had been made to the Forces' graded response system and Members asked what these changes were.

Answer: The change referred to the establishment of a resolution centre.

Overall Crime Performance

Other Theft – 22% of all crime was from "other theft" which showed there had been increases in all Borough Councils except East Staffordshire. Members asked for clarification on the reasons for this.

Answer: The figures were a snapshot at that time. In East Staffordshire the figure primarily related to shop lifting where better working relationships had been established with retailers and targeted work undertaken to tackle prolific offenders.

Acquisitive Crime – Members asked what was being done to address the increase in acquisitive and violent crime.

Answer: Staffordshire was in line with the rest of the Country in this increase. This was mainly due to changes to the way in which crimes were recorded and therefore a technical issue. However there was also an increase in confidence in reporting crime. There were some real time increases of violent and acquisitive crimes, with some of this relating to issues around drugs and alcohol.

Violence against the Person - figures indicated a sharp increase in violence against the person and Members asked the reasons contributing to this rise and how this would be tackled.

Answer: Interestingly nearly 50% of these crimes related to on-line offending, with much of this being around on-line threatening behaviour. The challenges presented by this relatively new on-line offence were recognised. There was also an increase in the number of domestic abuse cases which evidenced the growing confidence in reporting such offences.

Public Order - there had been a rise in anti-social behaviour of 33% and Members asked what was being done to tackle this.

Answer: This rise largely related to changes in methods of recording, where as previously one offence was recorded and any subsequent related incidents were included as "sub-matters" to the original offence, each separate incident now had to be recorded as a new crime.

Drug related ASB – Members asked if there had been a reduction in stop and search and if there had been fewer arrests as a result.

Answer: There was a national conversation taking place around Stop and Search. The Chief Constable had gone on record to say he was happy with the appropriate use of Stop and Search. Records and video footage was vital in evidencing this. The PCC explained that this work combined with that of the Safe and Able Panels, working well in Staffordshire. Stop and Search, when done properly, was an effective tool.

Body Cams

As there had been less police assaults since the introduction of body cams from the 12 month period following their introduction to the previous 12 months and similarly, more guilty pleas compared to the previous 12 months, Members asked if a cost benefit analysis been done in regard to their use.

Answer: The Chief Constable was looking to build an evidence base on this. The use of body cams was a personal issue for all officers in Staffordshire. They were expected to utilise these when using Stop and Search and they were also used in training. Their use had seen a reduction in the number of complaints against officers. Equally officers were aware their behaviour was being recorded. This was a very positive and well utilised tool in Staffordshire. The PCC indicated that he had introduced these in 2013 following a pilot two years before. The trigger for this had been the number of complaints made against the Police by individuals who were being arrested. The use of body cams had seen a dramatic reduction in such complaints.

Visibility

Members were aware that there were concerns regarding police visibility in Staffordshire. And asked the Chief Constable how he would define 'visibility'.

Answer: The definition came from data uplift from personal radios of both PCSOs and Police Officers that showed they were away from the station. From this there was a variation of visibility from 55% to 70%. However where witness statements were taken,

or members of the public seen, these invariably happened in the Station. Efforts were continually made to use officer time better, including effective use of technology such as the use of tablets to enable Officers to complete paperwork whilst away from the Station (although this was also dependent on radio coverage availability).

The Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel, Mr David Williams, felt there was a perception problem with regard to community policing. There were many different types of crime and some of these necessitated the Officers working from the Station rather than in the community.

Members asked for the number of police officers employed on neighbourhood policing.

Answer: 220 Police Officers were currently on neighbourhood policing. In June/July this year there would be an uplift to 270. Over the next three years there was a move to have 340 Police Officers working on neighbourhood policing. There were also 240 PCSOs and further police staff supporting this work. There were now 10 neighbourhood teams to cover each of the district/boroughs, with two in Stoke-on-Trent. Each team was headed by a Chief Inspector and a Sergeant. There were 240 Community Support Officers and 20 investigating officers.

Members asked for the number of police engaged in response policing.

Answer: Currently there were 700 Police Officers working on 24/7 emergency response policing. To accommodate the increase in neighbourhood policing there would necessarily be a reduction in other areas. There will be a reduction to 350 emergency response officers going forward. Non-emergency response does not need 24/7 emergency officer support and with changes to the type and number of emergency response calls this would be a more appropriate deployment.

Members asked what was being done to reduce bureaucracy.

Answer: Much of the bureaucracy was outside of the Chief Constable's control. However there was an increasing move towards online reporting which helped, as well as a move to streamline supervisory structures to help in its reduction.

PCSO powers

Members asked what powers PCSO's had in regard to the issue of fixed penalty tickets for parking offences and whether he would reconsider reinstating the traffic powers that were taken away from the PCSOs as Members felt this affected the credibility of the police to act.

Answer: The Chief Constable confirmed that PCSOs no longer had powers to issue fixed penalty fines and he was comfortable with this and had no plans to re-instate the use of these traffic powers as he felt their focus was better elsewhere.

Police Staffing

Members asked the number of officers who were fully restricted and what actions were being taking to address welfare/get those officers back to front line duties.

Answer: There were currently 51 officers on restricted duties. The restrictions were normally health related. 35 officers were on limited restrictions and 16 were restricted but with no limit on what they did. Staffordshire Police had a good occupational health team and it was important to support and manage colleagues through difficult health issues. A new People Strategy was also being developed to look at staff wellbeing.

Members asked for clarification over the special constabulary establishment and the recruitment process.

Answer: There were currently 290 Special Constables. Testing had in fact taken place this week of a further 16 and a new senior leadership team was being recruited.

Mutual Aid

Members asked if enough officers were trained to provide mutual aid and how often they had been deployed to offer mutual aid to other forces.

Answer: Mutual aid was a requirement placed on all 43 Chief Constables to help deal with national and local emergencies. This could also include mutual aid for pre-planned events. The Chief Constable offered to send details of mutual aid deployment after the meeting. In essence Staffordshire was a net donor of mutual aid. 2017 had been an exceptional year for mutual aid in the UK, particularly following the Manchester terrorism incidents.

Members sought assurance that enough police officers were left behind to deal with day to day operations during incidents of mutual aid deployment.

Answer: The Chief Constable was comfortable that enough officers were left behind to deal with day to day operations.

Members asked whether the Force had been reimbursed with the cost of delivering mutual aid and whether Staffordshire had requested mutual aid and the cost to us.

Answer: The costing model for mutual aid was nationally agreed and coordinated.

Cross Border Crime

Members asked how cross-border crime was dealt with.

Answer: Staffordshire made a contribution to the work of the Regional Organised Crime arrangements, including cross boarder burglary. As with other Counties Staffordshire had an issue with cuckooing, where vulnerable individuals were targeted and their homes used for illegal activity which was often cross border. Staffordshire had close working relationships with forces in the Midlands, East Midlands and North West.

Motorway Policing

Members asked if Staffordshire intended to remain in the Central Motorway Patrol Group and if there were any plans to work with neighbouring forces to share resources.

Answer: Three forces had collaborated on this, these being West Mercia, West Midlands and Staffordshire. However, West Mercia had now withdrawn. Staffordshire had no plans to withdraw. In fact policing and road safety on the motorway was being extended to the strategic road network, including the A500.

Crewing of Police Vehicles

Members sought clarification on the policy and justification for single crewing police vehicles and asked if this was having an impact on officer safety.

Answer: The Chief Constable felt it was clear that not every response required a double crew just as it would be inappropriate for all responses to be single crew. It depended very much on the nature of the response required which experienced control room staff should be able to make a judgement on. Emergency responses were primarily double crews, however all responses would depend on the variables of the time of day, the place and the type of call.

Local issue

Specifically what resources were being put in to Police Mill Green in Cannock, this query was as a result of concerns regarding an increase in thefts.

Answer: A range of developments were in place in Mill Green. These included proactive consideration of appropriate resources for the new development. This was one of a number of developments currently being considered.

The PCC informed Members that he had been in talks with all local council leaders to request the addition of a sum for policing to any new development as part of planning applications. All council leaders had declined.

The Chief Constable informed Members that he undertook work with developers around crime prevention for any new developments. Where such new building developments were completed, on average this would result in an up-lift of between 12-17 calls a day.

The PCC informed Members that once the work on Fire had concluded there would be savings to be made on elements of that service. These savings had not yet been allocated but some of those savings may be redirected.

Members were informed that whilst there would be more neighbourhood police officers following the proposed changes, the nature of the work they do would necessarily change. A large proportion of their work was expected to be around early intervention, working with partners to help prevent crime. There would also be a focus on offender management and visibility in communities.

Members asked whether there was any expectation of extending PCSO powers to enable them to take witness statements.

Answer: The Chief Constable felt that PCSOs and Police Officers had a very different role to play. PCSOs did provide statements in cases where they were acting as a witness, but they were not trained to take witness statements generally. However police staff investigators were able to take statements.

Members reiterated their concerns over the increase in inconsiderate parking and their wish for PCSO powers to be extended to include the issue of fixed penalty fines. Whilst understanding the Chief Constables' earlier answer Members remained concerned at the disruption and safety concerns created by poor parking. They also felt strongly that the role of the PCSO was undermined without this power and created a credibility issue for

them. They also had concerns that Local Authorities (LAs) had powers limited to parking on yellow lines, which failed to account for the majority of inappropriate parking. However whilst the Chief Constable understood these arguments he felt that he didn't have the resources to prioritise parking. He also felt that PCSOs had an education role around parking and closer working with partners to combat this rather than an enforcement role.

The PCC informed Members that two years ago cross agency work had been undertaken with PCSOs linking with schools over this issue. This work had been very helpful. However it was important to consider parking availability in any school development. He also informed the Committee that he had used his People Power Fund to develop parking availability where pockets of land were available as drop off points near schools.

Members asked whether PCSOs could be reassigned where necessary from shopping centres to streets within hard to reach communities.

Answer: The Chief Constable informed Members that PCSO assignment was intelligence led, with a need to ensure that resources were deployed where they were most needed.

The Chief Constable also reminded Members that the incidence and types of crime had changed considerably over the past five years. In particular he informed Members that the incidents of serious sexual assault and rape had increased significantly, from less than 900 to 4,000. Whilst much of this was due to increased confidence in reporting, each incident took a large amount of resource and time to deal with.

One Member commended the PCC for his use of funding to support Youth Zone which had resulted in a reduction of crime in the Newcastle area.

Members also asked what type of response residents should expect from reporting a burglary.

Answer: This would depend on whether it was a crime in action, where the response should be immediate, or reported after the event, where the response should be within hours rather than days. Depending on the nature of the burglary it may be that the most appropriate first response would be from a forensic officer. The Chief Constable accepted that at the moment non-emergency calls took too long to answer. There was work to be done on recognising priorities to response and ensure early contact.

Members had heard of examples where extra funding had been made available from borough/district, town or parish councils towards extra PCSO provision and asked whether this was something that could be considered in Staffordshire.

Answer: The PCC explained that it became complicated when funding was provided from different organisation and post-code policing would not be equitable.

Members asked what consideration was being given to widen communication with the general public to help avoid misperceptions of policing in Staffordshire.

Answer: The Chief Constable informed the Select Committee that a wide range of communication channels were used, including open Facebook sessions where he answered questions directly from the general public. Local Policing Commanders also attended a variety of events and meetings to highlight the work of local forces. There is a continuing commitment to raise the profile and improve communication; however this needed to be balanced with the resources available.

The Chairman thanked both the Chief Constable and the PCC for attending the meeting and answering the questions so frankly and in such detail.

RESOLVED – That the discussions with the Chief Constable and the PCC be noted and that details of mutual aid deployment be circulated to Members after the meeting.

4. Work Programme

The Scrutiny and Support Manager informed Members that their 8 June meeting would look at Child Sexual Exploitation and an update on the Children's Centres following a review in 2014.

Members also received an update on the work of the two ongoing review groups from their Chairman:

- Elective Home Education (EHE): Mr Paul Snape, Review Group Chairman, informed Members that after a considerable amount of work the Review Group was now putting together its report and would meet again shortly to agree the body of the report and draw together their conclusions and recommendations. He thanked all those involved who had assisted with this work, including the EHE parents, head teachers, advisors and SCC Officers who had taken the time to share their knowledge and experience;
- Edge of Care: Mr Conor Wileman, Inquiry Chairman, updated Members on progress with the Inquiry into children on the edge of the care system and work undertaken to safely avoid them coming into the system. Whilst a considerable amount of work had been undertaken, more evidence was needed before the analysis could be completed. The headline so far from this work was that Staffordshire do extremely well to prevent our children coming into the care system, with many initiatives developed to ensure children are able to stay safely in their home environment. He thanked all those who had given their time to inform the work of the Inquiry. The Group will meet again soon to discuss their final report and recommendations.

The Select Committee Chairman thanked the Members and Chairmen involved in these reviews.

RESOLVED – That the update on the work programme and progress with the review/inquiry group work be noted.

Chairman