



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Held: WEDNESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2021 at 1:00 pm as a virtual meeting using Zoom.

P R E S E N T :

Cllr Orson (Chair)
Cllr Pantling (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Kaur Saini, Cllr Mullaney, Cllr Harper-Davies
Cllr Phillimore, Cllr Westley (substitute), Cllr Woodman
Cllr Rahman, Cllr Taylor, Cllr Walters,
Mr Culverwell, Cllr Loydall, Cllr Whelband, Ms M Lalani

In Attendance:

Lord Bach – Police and Crime Commissioner
Kirk Master – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Simon Cole – Chief Constable of Leicestershire

Also, Present:

Angela Perry – Executive Director, OPCC
Paul Hindson, Chief Executive Officer, OPCC
Paul Dawkins – Chief Finance Officer (temp), OPCC
Andrew Furlong – Advisor to Lord Bach, OPCC
Sallie Blair – OPCC
Kamal Adatia – Monitoring Officer
Anita James – Senior Democratic Support Officer

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44. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman led introductions and advised this was a virtual meeting as permitted under section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 to enable meetings to take place whilst observing social distancing measures.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rae Bhatia

It was noted that Councillor Westley was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Rae Bhatia.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any pecuniary or other interest they may have in the business on the agenda. There were no such declarations.

46. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2020 be confirmed as an accurate record.

47. PROPOSED PRECEPT 2021-22 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP)

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) submitted a report for consideration concerning the proposed precept for 2021-22 and the medium term financial plan (MTFP).

The PCC and his Chief Finance Officer introduced the report setting out the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland context, history in relation to previous funding and the split between Home Office funding and council tax (precept).

Attention was drawn to several points including:

- Typographical errors at para 10 and para 76 should refer to a Band D property not Band B.
- The Police Grant settlement figure referred to in the report was still provisional and the final settlement should be confirmed by the end of January.
- In relation to para 23 of the report, it was clarified that the extra £4.5m was the net difference in precept plus collection fund from 2020/21 to 2021/22. The collection fund deficit for 2021/22 was an estimate and still to be confirmed.
- The tax base used in setting the budget was 330,081 Band D equivalent properties which was a modest rise in tax base Band D properties at 0.2% compared to 2020-21.
- The Home Office has confirmed to maximise council tax income for 2021/22 that PCC's can increase their precept on a Band D property up to £15 without triggering a referendum.
- In terms of budget risks: the Force were continuing their staff evaluation scheme which would be delivered upon in the year ahead, £204k of revenue costs had been included in the base to cover this; a view had been taken in relation to pay inflation with a pay freeze for the police service in 2021/22 but expectation of a rise in 2023. There was also a national issue regarding pensions around age discrimination. The force had 144 claims that may attract some degree of compensation pending the Employee Tribunal outcome on that, however it was not known what those costs will be or whether there would be additional funding in future to address that.
- The Emergency Service Network (ESN) is the national replacement Airwave radio/data communication system used by emergency services.

This project has been delayed by several years, it is hoped ESN will be implemented by end year although at considerable cost. It is estimated to cost £0.6m in 2021/22 with a further £5.2m in 2022/23 and no current indication of additional funding to meet that, so this risk had been built into the medium term financial plan and capital plan.

- Regarding police officer growth, the PCC made it clear that it was always his ambition to restore police numbers to pre-austerity levels as part of his original campaign and subsequent Police and Crime Plans. Last year's target was to recruit 100 officers during 2020/21. In 2021/22, 88 officers funded by the Home Office would be recruited as part of the government uplift programme, however the uplift programme was not enough to restore police officer numbers to pre-austerity levels, to address that the PCC had agreed to recruit an additional 50 officers in the financial year 2021 into 2022, those 50 officers costs would be supported through precept funds. All the officers the PCC had committed to recruit previously had been recruited and by next year that would include the 88 officers under the government's uplift programme as well as the additional 50 officers mentioned.
- The total cost of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) is £1.40m, which is a net increase of £70k from 2020-21, however it was noted that £20k of that increase was due to external audit charges, this was a national issue that had increased costs for the year ahead not just at LLR.
- 97.3% of the net budget requirement would be allocated to the Chief Constable for use on local policing and regional collaborations.

The Chief Constable addressed the panel and indicated his support for the proposed £15 precept rise which would enable enhancement of support to local communities across the whole Force area. Responding to the points made about police officer growth it was noted that the police service was in constant demand and the additional officers would be put to effect in neighbourhood teams; increasing school liaison posts; creating a rural crime team to augment work already being done in Leicestershire/Rutland; to increase the "missing from home" team as well as provide extra officers to road traffic investigations; prison intelligence; management of sex offenders; fraud and other teams.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the budget had been prepared on a robust and prudent basis and with due regard to the police and crime plan.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner drew the presentation of the proposed precept 2021/22 to a close, emphasising the PCC's commitment to engagement with communities/constituents and to increase officer numbers, noting also there had been considerable communication and planning around this budget which would deliver a range of different matters and reflected what communities and residents have been asking for.

Members of the Panel discussed the report which included the following points:

A Member queried Section 106 funding and it was explained this was used to fund capital expenditure directly related to a specific development. The

processes used by local authorities across the force area vary, whereas some insisted the Force spend first and produce invoices before releasing funds, others would advance funds. It was noted that Planning authorities were yet to release funds for 2020/21 before considering release of funds for 2021/22. The uncertainty around this meant no receipts were included within the Capital Programme 2021/22. There was further uncertainty about housing thresholds being met that trigger release of s106 funds and currently the OPCC were still trying to evidence where things stood with planners to factor into the Capital programme. It was agreed that a report on section 106 funding would be brought to the next Police and Crime Panel meeting.

Members expressed disappointment that there was a lack of detail given about efficiency savings. It was noted that the plan was work in progress that would be completed and shared with Members by the commencement of the new financial year 2021/22. Members were given assurances that there was little doubt that further efficiencies would be identified as the OPCC and Force were always looking to work more efficiently and smarter to save monies.

There was some discomfort with the statement in the report that the survey showed support from a “strong majority of residents”. Members discussed the relevance of a small focus group and whether this truly represented the views of the majority of LLR residents. Members suggested the survey numbers were from too small a sample to accurately reflect LLR. Concerns were also expressed that the survey script made no reference to an additional £7million in the government settlement prior to asking if they agreed a precept increase. Officers explained the rationale for the survey and that a robust methodology was used to achieve a representative nature. It was accepted that whilst numbers taking part in the survey were not large, the method used was the same as IPSOS/MORI and the survey was undertaken completely independently by a renowned company. Although numbers taking part in the survey were low, this still gave a very even proportionate split with a balanced response demographically and geographically across LLR. Members were informed that the findings also tallied with results of other surveys and engagements the OPCC and Police have conducted throughout the year with the public of LLR. In terms of the core script it was confirmed that information was provided to the company who determined the questions to be asked and although it did not specifically say that monies were separately provided to increase officers, it did include the government funded police officers in all the calculations, so participants could see the full picture.

Members welcomed the excellent presentation of the report commending the way it was set out and easy to follow however there was some dissatisfaction at the lateness of the provision of papers for the meeting. The PCC apologised for the lateness advising Members that ongoing robust discussion about the budget, balances etc had in part led to that.

It was noted that core grant funding had reduced since 2011-12, this was estimated in real terms to be a reduction in funding up to 2018-19 of 30%. Members expressed their concerns at the year on year reduction of Home Office funding and the disparity of funding allocation to LLR compared to other

forces around the country. Members were in support of increasing police numbers and were in no doubt that residents wanted extra police officers, however they were concerned that they were having to raise council tax (precept) in order to do that, particularly at a time when people were struggling due to the Covid-19 situation. There was also a concern that raising funds through the precept had a disproportionate effect on residents based on value of homes.

The PCC recognised that there had been much suffering during the pandemic and raising the precept had been heavily reflected upon, however there was an opportunity to increase police numbers and the amount that rate payers were being asked to pay was still a very small amount when compared to the council tax rate increases of local authorities.

It was queried whether the 50 new recruits might roll over and be levied next year to ease burden upon local taxpayers; in response it was advised that last year's police officer recruitment had already been settled and would be in post before 1 March. The police increase cost 2021/22 was a small part of the total precept that constituents will have to pay but the good that it will do is what panel were being persuaded of today, i.e. to get police numbers up, to protect against crime, to protect vulnerable and be able to help people when they need help. There was also a risk of not knowing what funding mechanism and funding would be available next year and beyond.

Drawing the debate to a close the Chairman commented that policing was a massive issue for many, in rural areas crime was rife and people did not feel safe so he understood the rise proposed and the desire to get back to policing numbers similar to 2010.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Pantling that:

- a) The information presented in the report and during the meeting be noted, including:
 - The total 2021-22 net budget requirement of £212.572m
 - A council tax (precept) requirement for 2021-22 of £81.936m
- b) The proposal to increase the 2021-22 precept by £15 per annum (6.43%) for police purposes to £248.2302 for a Band D property be supported
- c) The future risks, challenges, uncertainties, and opportunities included in the precept proposal, together with the financial and operational considerations identified be noted
- d) The Home Office grant allocations notified through the provisional settlement and the Band D council tax base and estimated collection fund deficit received from the billing authorities be noted
- e) The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contained in Appendix 1, the Capital Strategy at Appendix 2 and the Treasury Management Strategy at Appendix 3 be noted.

After careful consideration Members expressed their support for the proposed increase to the precept albeit with a heavy heart and upon being put to the vote

the motion was CARRIED by a majority.

RESOLVED:

1. That the information presented in the report and during the meeting be noted, including:
 - The total 2021-22 net budget requirement of £212.572m
 - A council tax (precept) requirement for 2021-22 of £81.936m
2. The future risks, challenges, uncertainties and opportunities included in the precept proposal, together with the financial and operational considerations identified be noted,
3. The Home Office grant allocations notified through the provisional settlement and the Band D council tax base and estimated collection fund deficit received from the billing authorities be noted,
4. The current Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contained in Appendix 1, the Capital Strategy at Appendix 2 and the Treasury Management Strategy at Appendix 3 be noted.
5. The proposal to increase the 2021/22 precept by £15 per annum (6.43%) for police purposes to £248.2302 for a Band D property be **SUPPORTED**.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Police and Crime Commissioner shall:

- Take note of the comments and concerns raised by Members of the Panel during consideration of this item as set out above,
- Provide a report on Section 106 funding to the next meeting,
- Provide a report detailing the Efficiency Savings to be made during 2021/22, including details of performance uplifts or return on investment to a future meeting,
- Provide regular updates on recruitment and retention numbers to future meetings.

48. ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AGAINST THE LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner left the meeting at this point.

The Police and Crime Panel considered a report by Kamal Adatia, Monitoring Officer, providing an update on complaints relating to the Police and Crime Commissioner over the last 12 months.

The panel were reminded of the policy framework and procedure for handling complaints and noted that the panel had reviewed and updated the complaints procedure as part of its review of the panels Constitution in December 2020, but the process remained unchanged.

The panel noted that five complaints were referred to the Monitoring Officer during 2020 alleging to impugn the Police and Crime Commissioner, in terms of

outcomes, one was referred to the IOPC who found that the allegations were without foundation, the other four also had no substance.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

49. WORK PROGRAMME

Members of the panel noted the ongoing work programme.

50. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None notified.

51. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions to the meeting today.

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 25th March 2021 at 1pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 16.15pm

