

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 4th March, 2014.

Present:- Councillors O'Connor (Chair), Davis, Hussain, Malik, M S Mann, Minhas, Nazir and Smith (Vice-Chair)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Grewal and Parmar.

PART I

73. Declaration of Interest

None.

74. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 6th February 2014

Resolved – That the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th February 2014 be approved as a correct record.

75. Member Questions

There were no questions received from Members.

76. Presentation by Sara Thornton CBE QPM, Chief Constable, Thames Valley

Prior to the presentation by the Chief Constable, Members wished to place on record a vote of thanks to Richard Humphrey, the former Area Commander for Slough.

Sara Thornton, Thames Valley Police (TVP) Chief Constable and Simon Bowden, Area Commander for Slough were welcomed to the meeting. It was brought to Members' attention that a review by Her Majesty Inspector of Constabulary in July 2013 had concluded that TVP had made a strong response to meeting its financial challenge over the past two years and that they were only one of four forces in England and Wales where the number of police officers in frontline roles was planned to increase.

Members were informed that the Police Delivery Plan 2013/14 contained six strategic objectives for TVP and were outlined as:

Objective One: to cut crimes there are of the most concern to the public and to protect the most vulnerable members of the communities.

- There had been a significant decrease in the number of crimes recorded in the Slough area.
- Fifteen full time staff were employed to scrutinise crime recording statistics for TVP to ensure accurate data was provided.
- The Police Commissioner had set specific objectives for the force to reduce their crime figures for and these were noted as violence against

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the person, burglary (dwelling), violence against the person with injury and rape offences.

Objective Two: Increase the visible presence of the police.

- Despite the financial challenges, TVP had increased the total number of patrol officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) from 2,371 in April 2011 to 2,419 in April 2013.

Objective Three: Protect our communities from the most serious harm

- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation: Members were informed that following the high profile case in Oxford, further resources had been dedicated to this area including additional staff and funds into Child Abuse Investigation Units. In addition, although Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) were being initiated across the force, this was proving to be difficult to establish in Berkshire. It was explained that with six unitary authorities' within Berkshire, agreeing on a MASH model was problematic. Although the favoured option was most likely to be establishing a MASH in the East and West of Berkshire, a number of options were due to be considered at a meeting with Chief Executives in the near future.
- Organised Crime Groups: A total of 72 organised crime groups were currently active in the Thames Valley area, 21 of which had been successfully disrupted in 2012/13. Partnership work with the Government Agency Intelligent Network (GAIN) to share information and disrupt organised criminality had proved successful. Details of Operation Saffron were outlined, where 23 people were arrested and 18 charged in connection with a street gang in Reading concerning firearms and drug dealing.

Objective Four: Improve communications with the public in order to cut crime and build trust and confidence with communities.

- Statistics regarding the number of visits to the website and social media followers were detailed.

Objective Five: To tackle bureaucracy and develop the professional skills of all staff.

- A number of initiatives had been developed to address the issue including a South East Police Shared Network Services Agreement which had resulted in significant savings.
- A new Records and Evidence Centre was opened in December 2013.
- Body Worn Video by officers – 300 cameras had been distributed across 33 locations since June 2013 and feedback there had been excellent feedback from operational officers.
- Following public consultation in November 2013, a new Code of Ethics had been implemented.

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Objective Six: To reduce costs and protect the frontline.

- Savings of £58 million had been achieved through shared activities with Hampshire and ensuring value for money in all activities.

In the ensuing discussion, Members' asked a number of questions, which included:

- The recent OFSTED report regarding Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Children in which partner agencies were criticised for not providing the support necessary/required to the Local Authority. Mrs Thornton stated that the quality of referrals made by the police following domestic violence cases had been identified as a weakness. To address the issue two additional posts had been created to this area to improve the quality of referrals made to the local authority.

Attendance by police representatives at multi-agency meetings was also referred to. It was noted that although the Area Commander would attend meetings of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board, it would be useful for a schedule of meetings to be sent in advance, as it was often difficult to support meetings at short notice.

The logistical difficulties encountered in establishing a MASH in Berkshire were reiterated and Members were informed that options to address the issue were being explored with the Berkshire unitary Chief Executives.

- A Member asked whether incidents of domestic violence had increased in Slough and whether sufficient resources were in place to address the issue. It was noted that although figures relating to domestic violence offences specifically were not available, statistics for violent offences in Slough had decreased by 4.5% and that appropriate resources were allocated for this area.
- Members asked for details relating to what work was being carried out to tackle forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Chief Constable explained that TVP were in the process of implementing a plan which raised awareness of FGM amongst police officers and focusing on multi-agency work. TVP were participating in a Local Conference in Slough, due to be held in June, to raise awareness of forced marriages. It was noted that there was no evidence of organised crime with regard to these specific matters.
- Following a Member query, an explanation was provided regarding response times to residential burglaries.
- Clarification was sought regarding the use of taser guns by officers. Members were reminded that previously only specially trained firearms officers were issued with taser guns. However, this had resulted in increased response times to incidents, especially in rural areas.

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Following a review of the use of taser guns, more officers had been trained, which had resulted in four trained officers on duty in each shift.

- Members were informed that child sex exploitation was a Thames Valley wide matter with investigations ongoing across the force. TVP were committed to working with a range of partners to ensure that the most effective strategy was in place to deal with any such cases. It was brought to Members attention that sexual offences against children had increased by 30% in the previous year and that this area presented the greatest challenge to TVP.
- Following a recent incident in the Queensmere Shopping Centre involving an explosive device, Committee Members were informed that the matter had been resolved very effectively, where safety of the public had been paramount.
- It was explained that police officers were allocated to areas based on crime figures and population per head and that as a general principle officers were single crew during the daytime.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Chief Constable Thornton and LPA Commander Bowden for attending the meeting and providing a detailed presentation.

Resolved – That details of the presentation be noted.

77. The Care Bill 2013 - 14 and Better Care Fund

Details relating to the Care Bill 2013-14 were highlighted for Members information. It was highlighted that the Bill was seeking specifically to reform legislation relating to support for carers, provisions for safeguarding adults from abuse or neglect, to make provision about care standards, to establish and make provision about the Health Research Authority.

Members questioned what the key areas of risk were and the implications that the Bill would have for Slough. It was noted that the comprehensive nature of the changes being proposed presented the greatest challenge and that a team including the Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and other relevant partners had been formed to address these.

It was agreed that any further detailed questions would be sent to the Scrutiny Officer and that the responses would be included as an information report to the April committee meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

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78. Co-option to the Health Scrutiny Panel

It was brought to the Committee's attention that a request had been received from Buckinghamshire County Council, seeking representation on the Council's Health Scrutiny Panel. The request specifically related to representation on the Panel for consideration of matters relating to Wexham Park Hospital. Members were reminded that the hospital provided healthcare to a population of over 450,000 covering Slough and a number of other neighbouring authority areas including a substantial proportion of southern Buckinghamshire.

Resolved – That a Member from the Buckinghamshire Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee be co-opted to the Health Scrutiny Panel for the consideration of matters relating to Wexham Park Hospital.

79. Forward Work Programme

Details of the work programme were outlined for Members consideration and comment. It was noted that the Corporate Plan would be added to the work programme for the 8th April committee meeting.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

80. Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Member's attendance record be noted.

81. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 8th April 2014.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.55 pm)