

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 13 February 2012

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I**

#### **FOR INFORMATION**

#### **POLICE REFORM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT 2011**

##### 1. **Purpose of Report**

To inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the latest situation with the police reforms in light of the passing of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

##### 2. **Recommendations**

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) note the requirements of the new Police Reforms and Social Responsibility Act;
- 2) note that the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel will consider how local scrutiny bodies can play a role in the development of the new arrangements and work to ensure that Slough's interests are strongly represented, and will report back to the O&S Committee; and

##### 3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Safer communities**

##### 4. **Supporting Information**

###### **Overview**

- 4.1 There are a number of elements that make up the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, and the impact on Community Safety Partnerships is one element (see report to Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel, 15 September 2011), but this report focuses specifically on the changes to the Police Authority body and the creation of a Police and Crime Commissioner and Police and Crime Panel.
- 4.2 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill was introduced into Parliament in December 2010, and proposed the most significant reforms to policing

accountability and day-to-day operations in the UK in the last 50 years. The Bill received Royal Assent in September 2011.

- 4.3 The most significant change to the arrangements will be the creation of a directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner (P&CC), replacing the traditional Police Authority. The election of the first P&CCs will take place in November 2012, with four-year terms and a limit of two terms for any one individual.
- 4.4 The P&CC is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the Police Force, and must hold the Chief Constable (CC) to account in this (including the power to hire/fire the CC).
- 4.5 The P&CC must produce a five-year Police and Crime Plan which will set out their police and crime objectives, financial resources available to the CC, performance measures and information relating to available grants. Following this, annual reports will be required.
- 4.6 The new Police and Crime Panel (P&CP) will be the scrutiny body which is intended to hold the elected P&CC to account. The P&CP will comprise of councillors from the Local Authorities in the policing area along with a couple of independent members. Therefore, the Thames Valley Panel will comprise of 20 seats (18 Local Authorities and two independent co-optees).
- 4.7 The main role of the P&CP is advising, influencing and recommending to the P&CC. However, the P&CP will have specific functions:
  - Contributing to the development of the P&CC's Police and Crime Plan (on which it will be a statutory consultee)
  - Scrutinise and make reports and recommendations on matters relating to the P&CC
  - Review P&CC appointments
  - Monitor complaints
  - Question the P&CC on the Annual Report at a public meeting
  - Veto power on precept and Chief Constable appointment

## 5. **Comments of Other Committees**

- 5.1 Minute from meeting of Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 15 September 2011 where there was an initial briefing on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill:

“James Priestman, Head of Community Safety presented a paper on the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill. Officers confirmed that this was a briefing supplied by Thames Valley Police HQ and as such, and given the fact that the Bill was still subject to change, officers present would not be able to answer any specific questions.

A number of general questions were raised including the likelihood that the elected commissioner would not have any substantive knowledge of Slough. Officers confirmed that due to changes to the Police Authorities and the way policing is arranged in the Thames Valley context – there was a very real possibility that the elected commissioner may not have substantive knowledge of Slough.

Members noted the contents of the report and thanked the officers for the short presentation.”

5.2 The Safer Slough Partnership (SSP) discussed the implications of the new P&CC at its meeting on the 30 January and agreed it would be important for the SSP to present the following arguments as to why it would be important for the P&CC to prioritise Slough and to work through the SSP:

- The volume of crime in Slough is such that the P&CC can have an impact on total crime in Thames Valley by focussing on a relatively small area
- Slough deserves help. It is providing jobs and schools that benefit the whole of Thames Valley. It is coping with challenges that are not common to other areas in Thames Valley.
- The structures and functions for reducing crime in Slough are well-developed – Slough is an easy area to work with. The impact would be felt beyond Slough if existing partnership initiatives were not given enough funding to continue.

## 6. **Conclusion**

Of particular importance when taking this process forward is ensuring that, in a large policing area like the Thames Valley, Slough’s voice is not lost amongst those of the larger Local Authorities. The issues that Slough faces often vary from those of the other Authorities and it will be important that this is not lost on the P&CC or P&CP as the policy direction for the Thames Valley over the next five years is set.

All partners involved in the Safer Slough Partnership have stressed the serious concern that Slough does not lose focus or funding as it fights its particular issues. It will be important that the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel play a central role in ensuring that the outcome of the new arrangements meet the particular requirements of Slough.

## 7. **Background Papers**

- 1 - Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 published by TSO (The Stationery Office)
- 2 - Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill report to the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 15 September 2011.
- 3 - Policing White Paper (Policy Briefing 5, Centre for Public Scrutiny) July 2010
- 4 - Policing and Social Responsibility Bill (Policy Briefing 8, Centre for Public Scrutiny) February 2011