

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 9 July 2014 commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at 12.31 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Liz Brighthouse OBE – in the Chair
Councillor Neil Fawcett (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor John Christie
Councillor Mark Gray
Councillor Steve Harrod (In place of Councillor Yvonne Constance)
Councillor Simon Hoare
Councillor Charles Mathew
Councillor Zoé Patrick (In place of Councillor Janet Godden)
Councillor Les Sibley (In place of Councillor Lynda Atkins)
Councillor Lawrie Stratford

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Kieron Mallon (for Agenda Item 7)

By Invitation: Mr Anthony Stansfeld, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner; Sara Thornton, Chief Constable

Officers:

Whole of meeting Eira Hale, Sue Whitehead (Chief Executive's Office)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

7 Carys Alty-Smith, Safer Communities Unit; Dave Etheridge, Chief Fire Officer and Community Safety Officer

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda, reports and schedule are attached to the signed Minutes.

25/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Atkins (Councillor Sibley substituting), Councillor Constance (Councillor Harrod substituting) and Councillor Godden (Councillor Patrick substituting).

26/14 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

Following comments from Councillor Christie the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June were approved and signed subject to the following amendment to the sentence immediately before the heading 'Summary of the Material Concerns':

'Following lengthy discussion and with Councillor Christie expressing the minority view that there had been adequate consultation and all points raised during consideration of the decision it was AGREED (by 9 votes to 2) to refer the decision back to Cabinet on the grounds of material concerns about the lack of proper consultation with Bicester County Councillors'

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2014 were approved and signed.

At this point it was agreed to vary the order of the agenda.

27/14 THAMES VALLEY POLICE - DELIVERY PLAN

(Agenda No. 6)

Sara Thornton, Chief Constable gave a presentation on the performance of Thames Valley Police against the Delivery Plan for 2013-14 and introduced the Delivery Plan for 2014-15 highlighting a number of key areas:

- (1) The number of officers on patrol was showing a slight increase.
- (2) Overall all crimes were showing levels below the national average. Responding to a query she recognised that the crime survey for England and Wales consistently recorded more crimes as it included unreported crimes.
- (3) The current Delivery plan objectives were set out with an indication that below the top level each objective was split into further objectives and sub-objectives. Sara Thornton highlighted the performance against the objectives in Oxfordshire. She referred to a number of initiatives taken including the doubling of special constables in recent years, the Street Triage Project, the Kingfisher operation, response to the flooding, increased use of social media and the use of personal video recording and improved use of IT. A new Code of Ethics was being developed to support the professionalism of the Police.
- (4) With regard to the Street Triage Project aimed at proving an appropriate response to people suffering from mental health difficulties Sara Thornton advised that feedback had been good with a reduction in the use of S136 emergency powers. Sustainability of the project was an issue with funding available for this year in Oxfordshire but not going forward or across the whole Thames Valley area. She asked that where possible Councillors lobby the Oxfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board and the Joint Commissioners of health services to support the project.

- (5) Sara highlighted the funding position commenting that it was about reducing costs whilst protecting front line operations. Collaboration with Hampshire was expected to provide key savings in the future. She added that they had not stopped recruiting. Funding over the next two years was expected to be difficult and it was a question of at what point as a Force do we say that we are cutting into operational capability.

The Chairman indicated that the Police and Crime Commissioner would deliver his presentation prior to questions and debate on both presentations which is recorded under Minute 28/14.

28/14 THAMES VALLEY POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER - REFRESH OF THE POLICE & CRIME PLAN 2013-17 & ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14
(Agenda No. 5)

Anthony Stansfeld, Police and Crime update outlining his intentions for refreshing the Police & Crime Plan for 2013-17 and the achievements of his first year in office, highlighting the 3 key priorities of his first Plan of domestic burglary, protecting vulnerable people and rural crime. After a year and a half he was updating his plan with a particular focus on a number of key areas including female genital mutilation, fraud and cyber crime, police file quality and the ethics panel.

During questioning the following points were raised:

- (1) Responding to comments on the level of unreported crime Sara Thornton stated that they were aware of the difference between the crime survey for England and Wales which was about double reported crime. This figure has remained consistent. It was very easy to report crime with the 101 number answered by trained people. Responding to the challenge that people did not report because not much happened she added that some people may have had bad experiences some years ago. Also realistically there were occasions where there were no lines of enquiry and an investigation draws a blank. In the past it had sometimes been about poor feedback and email addresses were now captured to make it as easy as possible for officers to follow up with victims. Anthony Stansfeld added that they had been inspected two years ago and had an excellent report. Certain crimes do get reported, burglaries and murder and crime was coming down. There was an issue with crime in the countryside but action was now taken and crime was being reported.
- (2) Responding to a suggestion that Force neighbours should learn from one another Sara Thornton gave an assurance that they worked very closely together.
- (3) Asked his views on a National Police Force Anthony Stansfeld replied that there had been debate and Forces could not agree on a way forward.
- (4) Members referred to the stress and long term sickness levels of police officers and queried if it could be linked to the need to do more with less? Sara Thornton replied that she had regular meetings looking at sickness levels as it was something she believed needed to be managed very closely.
- (5) Councillors highlighted individual crime figures for their own areas with Sara Thornton responding by providing a context noting that often the percentages were based on very low figures with small changes affecting the percentage

- figures. She could produce those figures for members with the raw numbers rather than in percentages.
- (6) Asked how he knew which crimes were of most concern Anthony Stansfeld advised that he had visited every Council and took their concerns into account alongside the concerns coming from the NAGs.
 - (7) There was some discussion of the fear of crime and the impact of low level anti-social behaviour. Sara Thornton referred to the structure in place to identify and resolve local issues but the issue was how long they would be able to sustain the current operating model that they used for neighbourhood policing.
 - (8) There was discussion of the perception of the Police and Anthony Stansfeld refuted that the perception was appalling in the Thames Valley. On the contrary perception of the Police was good. Sara added that they were not complacent although the figures in the crime survey for England and Wales, which she could provide, showed a difference between the data and press reporting. Pressure and scrutiny on officers was never higher and she highlighted actions being taken.
 - (9) Responding to a question on the proportion of those arrested being cautioned or charged and how many of those went on to a successful prosecution Sara Thornton replied that of those arrested about a third were charged, received a caution or fixed penalty notice. However the threshold for arrest was lower than the threshold for charging so there would always be a gap. She took the point made by the Chairman that if arresting too liberally then then it could impact on confidence of youngsters and it was something to be careful of. Conviction rates in Oxfordshire were at 84%.
 - (10) Responding to questions about whether there was information on the arrest patterns of individual officers Sara Thornton advised that there were no targets set around numbers of arrests or stop and search. Data would be available to local sergeants and Inspectors as part of the appraisal process for officers as the data was recorded. Anthony Stansfeld commented that the use of body worn videos increased the number of guilty pleas,
 - (11) Responding to comments about the Police Federation Anthony Stansfeld stated that he did not recognise the issues raised as relevant to Thames Valley. The complaints he dealt with often went back many years and he felt that the legislation needed review. The Chairman added that she believed they did receive a high number of vexatious complaints and so it was important to have the procedures in place and the data to refute them. Sara Thornton added that she believed the political campaigning of the Police Federation was wrong. However at a local level although she did not always agree with them she had found them helpful over a range of issues. It was not possible with the law as it stood to prevent officers from retiring if they had not been suspended. There was data on the number of retirements and she could provide this to Members.
 - (12) Referring to the pressures on funding and the earlier reference to the Health and Wellbeing Board Councillor Stratford suggested that the Police be more proactive in seeking S106 funding in areas of growth such as Banbury. Sara Thornton agreed it was an area they needed to be engaged in. Anthony Stansfeld noted that it could not be used for extra police officers but that it could help to design crime out.

The Chairman thanked Sara Thornton and Anthony Stansfeld for their attendance. She highlighted valuable joint working between the Council and Police on child sexual exploitation and on flooding. She queried whether the PIs of both organisations could dovetail to focus on working together to keep people out of the criminal justice system.

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29/14 OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (OCSP) BUSINESS PLAN REFRESH 2014-15
(Agenda No. 7)

Councillor Mallon, Carys Alty-Smith and Dave Etheridge attended for this item. Carys Alty-Smith gave a presentation on the work of the OSCP that focused on the business plan refresh for 2014/15.

Responding to questions and comments Carys Alty-Smith made a number of points.

- (1) radicalisation was not a problem but they were not complacent and a multi-agency panel met regularly.
- (2) Cycling crime was not seen as a priority and it would need to be raised through the local partnerships. Dave Etheridge undertook to take the matter back to the Road Safety Team.
- (3) Carys Alty-Smith agreed that there were funding pressures and detailed the way in which priorities were arrived at.
- (4) The link to the website giving information about the Partnership would be circulated.
- (5) The Partnership provided a single point of contact for Oxfordshire with a comprehensive business plan. They managed £780,000 of funding on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner and joined up the local partnerships providing a valuable place for conversations to happen to support cross county working.

The Chairman thanked the officers and Councillor Mallon for their attendance. Councillor Brighthouse was interested in some of the Partnership's PIs and how they fitted back into the County PIs around issues such as low level anti-social behaviour. She added that a key issue was safeguarding children and the links around children moving on and off plans as partners moved into and out of families to be succeeded by new partners. There was a need to ensure working was joined up

30/14 FORWARD PLAN
(Agenda No. 8)

No matters were raised for inclusion in the Forward Plan.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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