

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

30 AUGUST 2011

Present :- Councillor Andrew Ellis (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman (Former Mayor) ,
Nick Cope, Bill Frame, Theresa Higgins, Kim Naish,
Gerard Oxford and Colin Sykes

Substitute Members :- Councillor Mike Hardy for Councillor Will Quince
Councillor Sonia Lewis for Councillor Dennis Willetts

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Barrie Cook
Councillor Tina Dopson
Councillor Martin Hunt
Councillor Michael Lilley
Councillor Tim Young

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18 May was confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Nick Cope, Councillor Tim Young, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Bill Frame, Councillor Mike Hardy, Councillor Theresa Higgins, Councillor Sonia Lewis, Councillor Kim Naish, Councillor Gerard Oxford and Councillor Colin Sykes (in respect of being a member of their local Neighbourhood Action Panel) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Nick Cope (in respect of his former employment with the Home Office dealing with Police matters) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Tim Young (in respect of his membership of Essex Probation Trust) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Colin Sykes (in respect of his membership of Stanway Parish Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Colin Sykes (in respect of his membership of the Colchester Association of Local Councils) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Tim Young (in respect of his spouse being a member of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

4. Safer Colchester Partnership and Essex Police Reform

The following invitees attended the meeting for this partnership review;

Chief Superintendent Alison Newcomb, Essex Police
Assistant Chief Constable Tim Newcomb, Essex Police
Mrs. Linda Belgrove, Independent Member, Essex Police Authority

Also in attendance for this review were;

Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety
Councillor Tina Dopson, Portfolio Holder for Communities and Diversity
Mr. Ian Vipond, Executive Director and Chairman of the Safer Colchester Partnership
Ms. Bridget Tighe, Community Initiatives Manager

Essex Police – Reform Programme

Assistant Chief Constable Tim Newcomb presented the Essex Police Reform Programme, the Operational Policing ‘Blueprint’, a document that had already been put into the public domain through the media.

There was a need to make between £41 million and £42 million target savings by 2014, from an overall budget of £300 million, and this will have an impact on the overall headcount.

The ambition for the ‘Blueprint’ was to reconfigure operational services across the Force to:

- Improve productivity
- Increase availability
- Reduce cost

Front line operational policing would provide £17 million savings, the equivalent of approximately 388 full time officers to a level of 3,200 officers. The intention was to continue to provide a good level of service by creating greater efficiencies, maximising resources with an emphasis on the provision of modern technology.

Assistant Chief Constable Newcomb spoke at length about the new high level staff structure (Chief Constable – Superintendent) to support the reconfigured services, and the key features, including;

- Common force wide approach to each policing function
- Clear line management and accountability
- More efficient ‘borderless’ approach
- 25% Reduction in senior management costs
- Best use of technology
- Tightened performance focus
- Effective demand management

The County would be split into three main Local Policing Areas, North (including the

districts of Tendring, Colchester, Maldon, Chelmsford, Braintree and Uttlesford), West, South, and the two unitary authorities of Southend and Thurrock. The three Territorial Policing Commands would include ten district policing areas of equitable demand (including Southend and Thurrock), with a similar amount of incident workload, and each of these areas will be responsible for a wide range of policing services including;

- Community engagement - partnership and problem solving approach
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime. Reducing repeat victimisation
- Investigating and reducing anti-social behaviour
- Responding to scheduled 'General Police Duty' incidents.
- A number of Inspector led NPTs per district
- New Community Safety Units
- Youth Officer replaces Safer Schools Partnership officers

Specialist operations will include such things as Firearms, Mounted Police, Police Dogs, Motor Cycles and 24 hour emergency response and patrol resources, and would work from 8 hubs across the County, though operating on a 'borderless' approach.

The overall policing resources for Neighbourhood Policing in Essex will be 527 Police Officers (Police Constable (PC) to Chief Inspector) and 362 Police Constable Support Officers (PCSO), totalling 889 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) officers, compared to the current structure with 472 and 465 respectively, totalling 937 FTE officers.

The total resource allocation across Essex would be an establishment of 3,248.5 FTE, compared to the current number of 3,636.9 FTE, with some reductions in each rank with the exception of Inspector and Chief Inspector, both increased from their current numbers. This would provide a 25% reduction in senior management costs from Superintendent to Assistant Chief Constable.

Questions and Answers

In response to Councillor Cope, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Newcomb said within the new model there would be some increase in civil posts such as detention officers, recognising that this approach frees up officer time on the frontline. ACC Newcomb confirmed that the two Unitary Authorities would each operate as one of the ten districts across the whole of Essex. It was also anticipated that the increase in Custody Sergeants should reduce log jams.

ACC Newcomb responded to Councillor Sykes in respect of his willingness to see a reduction in PCSO for an equivalent amount of PC, given the PCSO, worthy that their roles are, have very little power. ACC Newcomb said the Police receive mixed views about the work of PCSO, though his experience by and large was that their work and presence was valued highly by the communities. Their work was about visibility and patrol, mixing with local residents, and where properly trained and deployed with purpose they are a valuable asset to the police force. ACC Newcomb believed the proposed mix of PC and PCSO was appropriate, though this would be kept under continuous review.

Responding to Councillor Sykes, ACC Newcomb said Colchester has a busy Night

Time Economy and the role of neighbourhood teams to engage with local businesses was an important factor in its success. More efficient processes, e.g. carrying out investigations by telephone where appropriate to avoid police visits, would enable the force to deploy more officer time policing neighbourhoods. ACC Newcomb confirmed to Councillor Frame that reducing the tiers of management within the overall structure had been considered. Historically, some forces had deleted Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector ranks, but later due to operational difficulties had these levels re-instated. This approach may be considered as part of a wider national review, but was not part of this current brief.

ACC Newcomb left the meeting at 7.00 p.m.

In ACC Newcomb's absence, Chief Superintendent (CS) Alison Newcomb responded to further member's questions on Police Reform.

In response to Councillor Chapman, CS Newcomb said a lot of work went into determining the right resources for the Response Teams, and was satisfied that the structure did have sufficient resources with the right skills and experience to respond within the national guidelines. Response times would continue to be monitored as part of the ongoing review. In regards to Police Station closures, CS Newcomb said within the eastern region 10 of the 11 stations that remained open on a full time basis are in Essex, with the eleventh being in Luton Town. The numbers of people visiting stations after midnight is very small. Whilst the front counters will close, they will still be contactable by telephone and a neighbourhood police presence will remain.

In response to Councillor Oxford, CS Newcomb said she did not anticipate that the evictions at Dale Farm would affect crime levels in other districts, believing it would not create a local problem.

CS Newcomb responded to Councillor Higgins, explaining that whilst police station closure would go ahead, this should not hinder the public's access to the Police. Telephone communications via 999 in an emergency or 101 the non-emergency number would remain, whether you want to report a crime or raise a concern. There had recently been unprecedented demands on the Police resulting in a backlog of local work, but it is envisaged that it will soon revert back to business as usual, with quicker responses to telephone enquiries and catching-up with backlogs.

CS Newcomb confirmed that there is an intention to have Special Constables to work alongside police officers at large special events and contribute to making Colchester a safer place.

Safer Colchester Partnership

Introduction

Councillor Tim Young, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety and the Council's representative on the Responsible Authorities Group (RAG), introduced the Safer Colchester Partnership review.

Councillor Young said the Partnership is currently operating in a year that saw the

partnership's Home Office funding cut by more than 50%, from £121,372 down to £49,742. Councillor Young said despite the cuts in funding, the partnership was committed to their four priorities for 2011-12, i) to address domestic abuse, ii) to reduce reoffending through integrated offender management, iii) to address alcohol abuse and iv) to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and would continue to deliver its regular projects to tackle crime as mentioned in paragraph 4.9 of the Safer Colchester Partnership report.

Councillor Young said the Safer Colchester Partnership remained a thriving partnership, with an excellent working relationship between the Council and Colchester Police.

CS Newcomb mentioned the latest crime figures in Colchester, that showed a projected year-on increase of 440 offences in 2011. Whilst the overall figure was up there has been a mixture of increases and decreases in the number of individual crimes, e.g. an increase in robbery, violent crime and sexual offences, but a decrease in household burglary and anti-social behaviour.

Have Your Say

Councillor Hunt addressed the Panel to raise the issue for many local Councillors whose wards have main roads leading out of the town centre, and the high level of late evening crime by individuals making their way home, e.g. car keying, damage to properties and theft, and whilst it was relatively infrequent, it did happen. Councillor Hunt asked about doing proactive work before the crime is committed.

CS Newcomb understood the negative effect of this crime on residents is significant. The police referred to the roads mentioned by Councillor Hunt as 'red routes', and the police do look at crime preventative measures in and around these areas. The town centre's night time economy was thriving, to the point that Colchester Town called on neighbouring districts for police support, and the police have every intention of detecting crime, determining how it happened and being proactive in mitigation against future instances.

CS Newcomb confirmed to Councillor Ellis that Colchester Police do work in partnership with the Military Police, and local people should be reassured that when appropriate dual policing is undertaken.

Safer Colchester Partnership - Questions and Answers

In response to Councillor Naish, CS Newcomb said anecdotally there is a link between crime and alcohol during the hours of the night time economy, and all crime is investigated thoroughly to determine the causes.

Preventative measures on the night time economy are taken using powers under the Public Order Act to take individuals into custody even though the probable crime was not carried out. Unfortunately, due to an anomaly in recording crime statistics, i.e. where a police officer intervenes so that no violence takes place because an alarm was raised and distress caused, the incident is still recorded as a crime, preventative measures do perversely drive up crime statistics.

Whilst the partnership's target was to reduce violent crime across Colchester by 1% in 2011-12, this may be considered a low aspiring figure, but when looking at trends, Essex has repeatedly reduced violent crime by 5%, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep repeating this success rate.

Mr. Vipond said in Colchester over the last few years crime had reduced substantially, reiterating that Colchester remains an extremely safe place to live and visit, and in regards to alcohol related crime, the Council work closely in partnership with the Police and Health Authority in addressing alcohol related issues.

In response to Councillor Sykes, and the determination of the Partnership's four priorities for 2011-12, Mr. Vipond said the assessment of local crime is undertaken annually, for the following year. Officers look to find the critical areas and the results are taken to the RAG meeting for further assessment and to determine the priority areas that are generally aligned with those priorities identified on a county-wide basis. Councillor Young said this process provides the top four priorities, though all other forms of offence or incident continue to be assessed and dealt with in the appropriate way. Mr. Vipond said the first three priorities, addressing domestic abuse, reducing reoffending and addressing alcohol abuse would have the biggest overall impact on reducing crime with the fourth priority, that of reducing crime and the fear of crime, needed to change people's perceptions and lives.

In regards to domestic abuse / violence, CS Newcomb responded to Councillor Sykes, saying overwhelmingly, women are the victims. The Police in partnership with the Health Service provide the resources to address this issue. That said there are instances of male victims, who are dealt with in the same way but for there being no 'male refuge' in Colchester.

In response to Councillor Sykes, CS Newcomb said 60-70% of crime is repeated crime by individuals, a revolving door of carrying out a crime, having a custodial sentence, being released and then reoffending. The Police work on a multi-agency project, in partnership with the Job Centre Plus and Probation Service, to pick up offenders and work to change their lifestyle and dependency on crime. Councillor Young said one of the biggest positive effects to this was community based sentencing as apposed to custodial sentences.

Councillor Higgins spoke about some of the criticisms pointed at Neighbourhood Action Panels (NAPs). That meetings are always chaired by police officers, some of whom, their chairing skills are debateable. Substitute officers often attend with no previous knowledge of the ward. Many issues now go beyond just policing.

In response, Mr. Vipond said following a recent review of NAPs, it was recognised that there was a need to encourage the public's greater participation, both in attendance and chairing, words echoed by CS Newcomb who said there was a need to find better ways of engaging with the public to improve public attendance. Councillor Young acknowledged that some NAPs worked a lot better than others, for instance, the St Andrews Ward model worked well, and he and Mr. Vipond agreed that developing NAPs on a one size fits all was not the right way forward. CS Newcomb said many of the issues raised were not about policing, but wider community issues, and Councillor

Young said there are also some issues that could be dealt with by Council officers rather than the Police, for example, fly-tipping, graffiti, dog fouling and general littering, and he and Mr. Vipond confirmed that with the introduction of zonal working, zonal managers would in future be the Council's representative at NAP meetings.

Mrs. Belgrove, Independent Member for the Police Authority addressed the Panel to explain there have been many issues raised through the recent review concerning the effectiveness of NAPs, though NAPs themselves were not consulted. Mrs. Belgrove acknowledged that the effectiveness and success of NAPs varied, some very good, some less so, but NAPs are a good forum for discussing local issues. She acknowledged that if some neighbourhoods do not have as many actions / issues raised, then they will not require so frequent meetings, but the meetings do provide residents with quality time to express their concerns. NAPs would benefit by consistency in procedures, for example, allowing Have Your Say, and having independent residents as chairpersons, accepting some may need chairing skills development.

CS Newcomb responded to Councillor Sykes saying it was extremely important that Ward and Parish Councillors received regular communication updates from police officers. The police receive feedback from the Councils and the police are measured in terms of customer satisfaction. Whilst the feedback has not always been good a lot of effort has been put into improving this situation, and it is showing signs of improvement. There is still a need to review the future of some NAPs and where there is no interest at all, to consider disbanding and finding a better use of resources.

It was explained to members that crime statistics are regularly updated and crime maps by ward are published regularly, available on the Colchester Police website. In response to Councillor Chapman, CS Newcomb said the number of race hate crimes was down, and there was no year on year increase on Eastern European abuse. The police are conscious that they don't always get the whole picture, and it was about getting people's confidence. There is now a dedicated officer looking at these cases and this is having an overall positive effect.

In response to Councillor Chapman, Councillor Young said there was sufficient funding for the SOS Bus for 2011/12. Beyond this, multiple agency talks would continue to keep as a permanent feature of the town centre's night time economy. Mr. Vipond said 2012/13 would be a transitional year for RAG who would consider a report looking at a number of ways of providing long-term sustainability of the SOS Bus, and was hopeful of a positive solution. Mrs. Belgrove congratulated Colchester on the SOS Bus project saying these arrangements had been applauded across all parts of Essex, a forerunner to similar projects happening around the region.

RESOLVED that the Panel;

- i) Thanked Assistant Chief Constable Tim Newcomb, Chief Superintendent Alison Newcomb of Essex Police and Independent Member Linda Belgrove of Essex Police Authority for attending the meeting and responding to questions from the Panel.
- ii) Noted the presentation by Assistant Chief Constable Tim Newcomb on the

Essex Police Reform Programme.

iii) Noted the presentation by Chief Superintendent Alison Newcomb on the Safer Colchester Partnership.