

Report from the Police and Crime Panel Working Group

23 January 2015

Police and Crime Plan Working Group – Final Report

Report by the Chairman of the Working Group

Summary

This report is intended to inform scrutiny of proposed amendments to the Police and Crime Plan presented under item 5ii, and the proposed policing precept for 2015/16, presented under item 4 of the agenda.

The Group made a number of observations related to the Plan, budget, and proposed precept, which the Panel is asked to consider.

Recommendations

Amendments to the Plan

1. The Panel is asked to consider paragraph 2.1, and determine if the proposed amendments to the Police and Crime Plan sufficiently address these points.

The 2015/16 Budget

2. The Panel is asked to consider paragraph 2.2, and determine if the draft budget sufficiently address these points.

The Proposed Policing Precept for 2015/16

3. The Panel is asked to note paragraph 2.3

1. Background and Methodology

- 1.1 This Working Group (WG) was established by Sussex Police and Crime Panel (PCP) at its meeting of 28 June 2013, to act as critical friend to the development of the Police and Crime Plan 2014/17, and report its findings back to the Panel. At the January 2014 meeting, it was agreed that the Group would meet at the appropriate point during each year's cycle (while always reporting back to the January Panel meeting), and that the Group's terms of reference would expand to include consideration of budget development.
- 1.2 During the preparation cycle for the 2015/16 Budget/Precept/Plan amendments the Group met twice, on 17 September and 21 November 2014. The Group heard evidence from the Commissioner's Chief Executive, her Chief Finance Officer, and the Director of Finance for Sussex Police.

2. Discussion and Recommendations

Plan

- 2.1 The Group considered key areas of the current Plan, and made observations as follows :

Plan - General

- a) Although the Plan covered a four-year period (to 2017), no activities beyond November 2015 were identified.
- b) Updates to the Plan should use the opportunity to provide details of achievements already accomplished in the Plan term to date.
- c) The Plan forward should spell out the process for its "annual refresh", which was not clear within the document.
- d) Mention of White Ribbon status should be expanded to explain what work was being undertaken to address domestic violence.
- e) Business crime and engagement with business should be referenced in the Foreword.

Plan - Performance and Measures

- f) The measure relating to the reduction of crime per 1,000 population was a worthy objective but there needed to be detail to indicate if this measure had been accomplished. The achievements in the Plan stated that recorded crimes per 1,000 population had decreased by 7% but this was not qualified with any further information to indicate what the target reduction had been or if this reduction had fulfilled the target decrease for the period. Similarly, the achievement outlined under the Victim Focus objective stated that Victim Satisfaction remained constant at 83%, without any qualification to indicate if this had been the objective, and if this represented success. It was not possible to discern where success had occurred under the objectives in the plan as measures had been provided without specific targets.
- g) The Plan should provide detail of the victims' services commissioning exercise. The commissioning of services for victims of crime by the PCC required a credible measure to assess the success of the new arrangements when established.
- h) Services providing on-going support for victims of crime were not restricted to the criminal justice system. The measure regarding Victim Focus should be expanded to include other services for victims of crime that contributed toward increasing victim satisfaction;
- i) There should be signposting in the report to direct people to detailed performance information relating to the objectives in the Plan.

Plan - Areas Which Would Benefit from More Detail

- j) Changes in Sussex including population growth and changes to demography had occurred since the first publication of the Plan; such change should be highlighted along with any possible implications for local policing.
- k) The Plan had a role to play in outlining to the public what changes were envisaged to the Police Force and to promote the value and need for such changes.
- l) The page of the Plan referring to the PCP should incorporate two amendments to state that the Panel is independent, and a reordering of

the wording should state that the Panel provides a transparent check and balance.

- m) The Plan should seek to highlight the consultation undertaken with the Youth Commission and how this had changed the Commissioner's priorities or other elements of the Plan.
- n) It was queried whether the Plan should respond to or make mention of national issues e.g. the Rotherham scandal and any implications for Sussex.
- o) Under the Drugs and Alcohol section of the Plan the impact of alcohol in particular should be emphasised to highlight crime emerging from the use of alcohol.
- p) The decreasing Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) amounts should be explained within the Plan. The decrease could be interpreted as a consequence of a declining detection rate.
- q) Child abuse and elder abuse were not currently contained in the Police and Crime Plan and it was felt that in the light of the Rotherham scandal, and issues of elder abuse along the South Coast, that the Plan should place an emphasis upon these elements.
- r) Under the Partnership section there should be a clear distinction between business crime and rural crime and separate sections were required;

Budget

- 2.2 The Group were briefed on the imminent financial challenges faced by Sussex Police, and also considered the medium term financial forecast.

While recognising that the Panel had no statutory role in approving the budget, the Group made the following observations:

- s) The Medium Term Financial Forecast Planning Assumptions appeared to apply inflation across the whole of the budget. However, certain elements of the budget would not be affected by inflation. Papers presented to the Panel meeting in January should clearly define the impact of inflation on different elements of the budget.
- t) The budget presented to the Panel in January 2015 should clearly distinguish the investment in the priority areas, the savings totals, and targets.
- u) The Group supported the Commissioner's priority of pursuing greater levels of income generation.
- v) Success involving income generation should be highlighted and the benefit to the public emphasised.
- w) The Budget for 2014/15 was difficult to find on the Commissioner's website.

Precept

- 2.3 The Group heard evidence on how the 2014/15 precept increase had been allocated, and were reassured to learn that the revenue raised had been invested in the agreed priority areas (sexual violence, domestic abuse, child exploitation and cyber crime). It had not been used to offset cuts in grant funding, as had been the case in other police force areas where the Commissioner had elected to increase the precept.

3. Working Group Resource Implications and Value for Money

- 3.1 The cost associated with the Working Group has been met from within the funding received by Sussex Police and Crime Panel from the Home Office.

4. Risk Management Implications

- 4.1 Scrutinising the Annual Police and Crime Plan and reviewing the proposed policing precept are core aspects of the Panel's role. A failure to adequately undertake these duties risks breaching the applicable sections of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

5. Other Considerations – Equality – Crime Reduction – Human Rights

- 5.1 The Police and Crime Plan sets out the strategic direction for policing in Sussex. As such, there are clear implications for local authorities' duty to avoid or to reduce crime or anti-social behaviour, or to assist partners to do so.
- 5.2 There are no implications which compromise human rights. The recommendations treat all members of the community equally.

TFG membership

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Brad Watson OBE, West Sussex County Council (Chairman)
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