

Dyfed Powys Police and Crime Panel

Friday, 5 February 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A. Lloyd-Jones (Chair)

Carmarthenshire County Council Member:

Councillors K. Howell and J. Prosser;

Ceredigion County Council Members:

Councillors L. Edwards and K. Evans;

Pembrokeshire County Council Members:

Councillors M. James, S. Joseph and R. Summons;

Powys County Council Members:

Councillors D. Evans, L. George and W. Powell;

Independent Member:

Mrs H. Thomas

Prof. I. Roffe;

In attendance from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner:

Mr. D. Llywelyn - Police and Crime Commissioner;

Mrs. C. Morgans - Chief of Staff;

Ms. B. Peatling - Chief Finance Officer;

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Edgecombe, Legal Services Manager

J. Laimann, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

E. Bryer, Democratic Services Officer

S. Rees, Principal Translator

J. Corner, Technical Officer

Virtual Meeting - 10.30 am - 12.15 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND PERSONAL MATTERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jim Jones (Carmarthenshire County Council).

The Chair extended best wishes for a speedy recovery to Councillor Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest made at the meeting.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 4TH NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Dyfed-Powys Police and Crime Panel meeting held on the 4th November 2020 be signed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (IF ANY)

No matters were raised at the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM PANEL MEMBERS TO THE COMMISSIONER

5.1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KEITH EVANS

“What action has the Commissioner taken in the wake of demand for additional policing at the asylum seekers camp in Penally, Pembrokeshire, which I fully understand and appreciate were due to circumstances beyond yours or the Forces control, and are you through your dialogue with the Chief Constable able to provide assurance that policing in the remainder of the Forces’ area has not been diminished as a consequence?”

Response by the Commissioner:

The Commissioner advised that policing resources were moved in response to demand on a daily basis and the Police had been very active across the force area despite additional pressures in Penally. The additional demand had been covered through a combination of officer overtime and resources from other forces. Pressures on policing had reduced overall in recent months, which was attributed partly due to the weather and the effects of lockdown restrictions in response to the pandemic. The Commissioner would continue to monitor the situation in Penally through daily correspondence with the Chief Constable and the Divisional Commander for Pembrokeshire. He was also involved in lobbying work around a review into the conditions at the camp.

5.2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR KEITH EVANS

“It was recently reported in the media that you have made circa £200k available to community groups within the Dyfed Powys Force area. With the pressure on public finances currently, are you satisfied that this is a good way of expending public funds?”

Response by the Commissioner:

The Commissioner advised that the expenditure was related to participatory budgeting events, which took place across the Dyfed-Powys force area through Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs). He had committed £10k to each neighbourhood policing area, totalling an investment of £140k across the force area. Several NPTs had succeeded in securing additional funds from local partners and organisation, which had resulted in a total of £213k that local community groups could apply for. 111 community projects had been funded overall and the success of the work undertaken would be assessed to inform future funding considerations.

6. POLICE PRECEPT

The Panel considered the Commissioner’s report on the proposed police precept for 2021/22. The Panel was advised that it could make the decision to either approve, reject, or veto the proposed precept at the meeting and thereafter had to issue a report on its decision to the Commissioner. The decision to approve or reject could be made by a simple majority while a veto vote had to be supported by a two-third majority of the entire Panel membership. It was further advised that, if the Panel chose to veto, the Commissioner would not be able to issue the

proposed precept and would have to publish a response to the Panel's report, indicating a different proposed precept, for consideration on the 19th February 2021. The Panel would not be able to veto the revised proposed precept but could only decide to approve or reject it.

Councillor Keith Evans (Panel Lead on Finance) provided a presentation on the Panel's Finance Subgroup's scrutiny of the 2021/22 precept proposal including the 2021/22 - 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan, Reserves Strategy and Capital Strategy.

He advised that the 2021/22 grant settlement for Dyfed-Powys Police was £59.529m. This included a grant to partly cover additional costs from changes to employer's pension contributions as well as ring-fenced funding for recruitment of additional officers. The Panel was further advised that, without an increase in the capital grant, there was continuing pressure on diminishing reserves to fund critical investments into estate, IT and fleet infrastructure, with a predicted reduction of usable reserves to £4.960m by 2025/26.

Cllr. Evans advised that he commended the report, which proposed a precept increase of £1.25 per month on a Band D property equating to a 5.76% increase on the previous year. He thanked the Commissioner and Chief Constable for organising a finance seminar that supported scrutiny of the report.

The Panel thanked Cllr. Evans and the Commissioner for their detailed and informative reports.

A query was raised as to whether, in light of the economic impact of the pandemic, it would be possible to postpone investments into any of the capital projects in order to ease Council tax pressures on local residents. The Commissioner advised that any delays to the capital programme were likely to increase costs of operational policing in the long term.

In response to a query on spend-to-save investments into energy and sustainability initiatives, the Panel was advised that a grant application submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme had successfully passed the first stage.

RESOLVED that the Commissioner's proposal to increase the Dyfed-Powys Police's precept by 5.76% for 2021/22 be endorsed.

7. COST OF POLICING ASYLUM SEEKERS CAMP AT PENALLY

The Panel received a report on the costs of policing the asylum seeker camp at Penally, which was appended with two draft letters to the Home Secretary, Policing Minister and all MPs in the force area, one of whom was the Secretary of State for Wales.

The Panel was advised that the costs of policing the camp were placing a significant financial burden on Dyfed-Powys Police, which was currently not expected to be fully reimbursed. Under the Home Office rules relating to police funding, special grant funding could be provided in respect of these expenses, but

only once the total cost exceeds 1% of the net revenue expenditure for the year. This implied that it would not normally be possible to secure any additional funding until a threshold of £1.129m was exceeded. However, Government Ministers had the power to allow the recovery of costs below the 1% threshold.

The draft letters to the Home Secretary, Policing Minister and local MPs were calling upon the Home Office to fully reimburse Dyfed-Powys Police for all costs incurred in policing Penally camp, even if below the usual 1% special grant threshold.

In response to a query, the Panel was advised that the expenditure threshold in the last paragraph of the letter incorrectly stated £1.29m instead of £1.129m. This would be corrected before the letters were sent.

RESOLVED that the sending of the letters to Home Secretary, Policing Minister and local MPs be approved.

CHAIR

DATE