

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Tuesday, 20th January, 2015

Present:- Councillors Robin Moss (Chair), Cherry Beath (Vice-Chair), Patrick Anketell-Jones, Brian Simmons, Geoff Ward, Dave Laming, David Martin and Will Sandry

53 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

54 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillors Furse and Hartley had sent their apologies to the Panel.

Councillors Sandry and Laming were their substitutes respectively.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

57 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none.

58 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

Susan Charles had asked the Panel for an update on the issue of provision of disabled parking spaces outside Keynsham Leisure Centre.

The Chairman said that he, on behalf of the Panel, would address the Cabinet on 11th February.

59 MINUTES

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman.

60 POLICE: NEW OPERATING MODEL UPDATE

The Chairman informed the meeting that this was an opportunity for Avon and Somerset Police to talk to us, and answer questions, on the impact of the New Operating Model on Bath & North East Somerset, including the proposed changes to police stations in the Bath and North East Somerset area.

The Chairman introduced Chief Superintendent Caroline Peters, from Avon and Somerset Police, and asked her to give a brief introduction on the new Operating Model. The Chairman informed the meeting that Caroline Peters would answer questions that had been submitted in advance of the meeting and then, time permitting, answer questions made on the day.

The Chairman also said that he would be accepting questions only, and not statements. If Councillors and public would want to make their statements then they could do that on Avon and Somerset Police website.

Caroline Peters took the Panel through the report, as printed in the agenda, explaining its background and proposals for the New Operating Model. Caroline Peters also introduced Chief Inspector Norman Pascal (Local Policing Area Commander) and Rebecca Harris (Continuous Improvement Officer).

Questions:

Councillor Manda Rigby:

'What are the plans to protect the current presence of front line officers, including PCSOs, in the City centre when the Manvers street facility closes? Specifically, how can we be convinced that time spent commuting to and from Keynsham custody centre will not take police presence off the streets, and what facilities will there be for police based in the centre?'

Caroline Peters:

'Closure of Bath Police Station put some angst within the community and the Council. To give that re- assurance – for me it is absolutely important that there is police presence in Bath and that would be maintained. The issue for me and the challenge will be where to house them. We have two more Police Officers and we will have that presence and know what is going on within city centre and make community contacts. We will equally have those walkers with the same energy to walk around and positively engage with people. We will have people for the night time economy, whether it is a shoplifter or for anti-social behaviour. So, there will be police presence in the city and they will be there for longer period of time. The main issue is where we will house Police Officers. We are looking proactively where the best to put the neighbourhood teams and response teams is, so we can have quick response team not just to city centre but also to outline areas. We don't want to be too far away from the city centre, but it comes down to cost. We cannot justify to house officers in huge building. We are actively talking to the Council about One-Stop-Shop at Manvers Street and we are looking what options are there, in particular

for enquiry officers. We are very keen to maintain 8am-8pm opening hours for our enquiry office. We have until January 2016 to house the rest of the teams’.

Councillor David Martin:

‘1) A key feature of the new policing model is the shift to local policing teams. The benefits are said to be smarter working, and more efficient use of resources. Could you give us some examples of where this has worked in practice, and whether the benefits have been realised?’

2) Also in the development of local policing, the plan includes a new role of neighbourhood manager. The model mentions pilot projects in parts of the force area during 2014. How have these projects gone, and are you now introducing these new approaches in B&NES?’

Caroline Peters:

‘South Gloucestershire area was one of the pathfinders for neighbourhood manager and we have been doing the same since January 2014. Bristol and Somerset followed up shortly after us. What was clear from the beginning was the real shift around shift alignments and also around what the demand was from members of the public and one of the biggest benefits was that when neighbourhood response teams aligned together then they worked more joined up, they shared understanding on what community priorities are in the area but equally what’s happening from the response point of view. So, whatever the demand may be, the team inspector and sergeants can be more dynamic in their decision making as where they want to put those resources. It is absolutely crucial that the neighbourhood teams are around and we don’t want to move them from their areas at all. But, we have to accept reduction in general resources, which dictate that they have to be more multiskilled to be able to do whatever comes through the door, whether on short or long term. One of the positives is that they will be sharing best practice and look at any issue. They can identify known offenders and deal with them. With sharing scheme and intelligence we will have people 24 hours per day. For example, no need for neighbourhood team after 3am. It is about working more smarter, more intelligent, from what the public want from us.’

Councillor Geoff Ward:

‘1) Respecting that the future of policing will be intelligence led how can Avon & Somerset Police hope to collect effective intelligence when it is clearly reducing its presence within the city and concentrating its human and specialist resources elsewhere? Surely intelligence which is credible and reliable comes from a multitude of source many of which a grown over time by police that really know the local area and community they serve. How will this be improved by the new Police Operating Model?’

Caroline Peters:

‘I have every confidence with the new intelligence system. The biggest advantage now is 24/7. We are still relying on the ‘boots on the ground’, as eyes and ears of the community and with high level of the engagement between police officers and staff still talking with the community. Whatever conversation comes out of it, it will be fed back to the centre. The centre would look at the intelligence and it could predict if something going to happen. It can identify community hotspots, with anti-social

behaviour, or particular area that is suffering from motor vehicle crime. What it then does, it feeds back to us, in live time, in a condensed way, more focused on information that enable teams to respond to that particular area. You don't have an officer that would not be briefed or familiar with the area. Shared data between teams, work with partners, work with police and community – is what will make our officers work smarter.'

2) What are the results of the cost and time analysis for policing Bath City and suburbs based from the chosen alternative base location once Bath police station closes?

Caroline Peters:

'Our custody provision was not fit for purpose. We had to look for dedicated staff for custody provision, detainee investigation teams (to take that work off front line officers and staff). The obvious concern was travelling time due to location. There will be journey time involved but officers would just need to hand prisoners over and come back. No need to wait in the queue or deal with detainees. It's excellent environment for police officers and staff to deal quickly with individuals. It will free up officers time to get back to the next call.'

3) Whilst the Police Operating Model extensively deals with the operational aspects of policing, there is little mention of the character and nature of the different crime threats within the Force area. Bath characterises itself as having a night-time economy which is sometimes the focus for the policing challenge. How will the functions currently provided by Bath Police station be replaced without additional call on Police resources?'

Caroline Peters:

'We now have access to wider resources. If we have rave party, for example, we now have additional resources in place to task and deploy them. We have additional resources that we never had before.'

Councillor Will Sandry:

'On occasion people with mental illness, either having been "sectioned" or needing assessment by a mental health professional are held in police cells.'

In the new police operating model what systems/facilities are going to be in place to reduce or prevent the incidence of people who have committed no crime and are "just unwell" being detained within the new custody suite?'

Caroline Peters:

'I share the concern. The police cell is the very last place you want to put someone with mental health in. The difficulty that we have is that we are very much reliant on what the other services could give, in particular health. Again, with the reduction in resources, beds are what we need. Our Police and Crime Commissioner have taken this on seriously. Unfortunately, due to lack of beds in the area, the first point of call would be at the custody centre. We are now training our staff to deal with people with people with mental illness. It is not ideal but we cannot leave them in the public where they may cause harm to themselves or others. There is only one bed in Bath, but in Carlingcott Road in Bristol we have five additional beds which we didn't have

before. Those are small numbers but we are working with our partners to make sure that the support is more adequate. Avon and Somerset are looking into this as an important issue and working quite hard with partners.'

Councillor Will Sandry:

'Morland Road. Police officers came to talk with the all traders about low level theft that was not reported. In the model, these five walkers are within city centre. Bath and North East Somerset is not only Bath city centre. Will these walkers cover wider area, like Morland Rad or similar?'

Caroline Peters:

'This is perfect example on how our staff will work in future. With assistance of traders and partners we now have local support teams and neighbourhood manager that will actually concentrate on specific areas to look at how to utilise resources and tackle that problem. We have officers to look at how to prevent the crime in the first place by looking into number of initiatives. The crucial part is that we have local problem solvers now that can look at it and to engage traders and how they can support us as much as we can support them in dealing with issues.'

Norman Pascal:

'Allocation of resources is based on the demand. So, the number of staff required for the city centre would be allocated as per demand, not just because it is city centre.'

Councillor Will Sandry:

'Bath is having large population of students and it might be helpful if we have dedicated beat officer that looks after universities. That might be helpful in dealing with party households. Would you consider such thing? Would you need additional resources, or funding, from the Council or universities?'

Norman Pascal:

'Yes, I think we do need beat officer for both universities. University of West of England funds their beat officer. Universities would have great service from beat officer. It would be great to have one officer but we would require additional resources/funding for that post.'

Caroline Peters:

'There is still an opportunity for universities to work with local support teams to provide additional support for student population.'

The Chairman informed the meeting that three members of the public, who submitted their questions before the meeting, did not turn up. The Chairman used its discretion to read out those questions.

Norma Wilson:

'Regarding the imminent relocation of Bath Police Enquiry Office and the fact that other police resources are to be moved away from the centre of Bath can we be assured that the hours of access for the general public to the Enquiry office will remain between the current hours of 08.00am to 8.00pm.'

I feel that a city the size of Bath with the ever increasing student population would be poorly served if those hours were cut any further. We have gone over the years from having 24 hour access, then to closing at midnight, then to 10.00pm and very recently to the current closure time of 8.00pm. Any further reduction in hours of access would be doing a massive disservice to the residents of Bath and surrounding areas.'

Caroline Peters:

'The enquiry office is open from 8am to 8pm and key issue for us is to house our officers. We will be looking at the One Stop Shop. If we were to use One Stop Shop then we need to organise ourselves for our opening hours. Also, to take into consideration on footfall and what would be Council's responsibility in One Stop Shop. I don't think it's anything there that we would struggle to overcome. Over the last few years there was a decline in people coming through the door of police station. People are using social media, email, etc. to report issues. Going forward, it is very important that we are accessible and open to the public as some people will chose to meet face to face. At the moment I am strongly considering One Stop Shop for enquiry office.'

Margaret Dagger:

'As a resident of Bath I really would like to know who and why was the decision taken to close Manvers Street police station.

Bath is a heritage city which caters for very many visitors from all over the world, where will they go if help is needed?

Apart from the local residents who have a problem also. It is quite rare now to see police walking the beat and if they have to arrest a person AND take them to Keynsham to be charged that means that there will be one less around for at least 2.5 hrs and we do not seem to have enough police men/women to police Bath. I am aware that we do have some excellent PCSO's but they are not able to do all of the work the proper police do. Please wake up Avon & Somerset we do need a police Station in Bath and sufficient staff to maintain it.'

Caroline Peters:

'It was the right time to close the building in Manvers Street. It is a very big building and it is part of the heritage. However, it is very hard to justify to the taxpayer the amount of money used to maintain that building. With amount of people that we have now we can use only one floor to manage the station, whilst in the past we used all four floors. Most of the services have not come out of the building (many moved to Keynsham). It would be shame not to use the building. The police will not leave Bath just because police station is not there. As far as visibility is concerned – people may not see PCSOs or police officers as often as they do but they get more involved with the community who share local knowledge. For me, the most exciting prospect is an increase in special constables across the area. Also, having youth engaged is quite exciting.'

Ms Jenkins:

'On the 16th June 2014 Chief Superintendent Sara Crew quoted:

"That by selling off large buildings, the force would not have to lose any Neighbourhood Officers or PCSOs"

And

“as far as the public are concerned they should see and feel a better service, and not a reduced one”

We have made no reductions in neighbourhood policing.

No reductions in the number of neighbourhood officers or PCSOs

During the last six months it has been quite noticeable that the rural areas of Bath & North East Somerset very rarely see a Police Officer or PCSO patrolling on foot or in a vehicle, within our small towns and villages:

Is this due to our Police and PCSOs being deployed to other areas?

And if so:

This is going to have an impact in the future on increased anti-social behaviour, burglaries, car thefts and other crimes, which has taken a number of years to reduce in our rural areas, and with the decline in Police and PCSOs presence, members of our community will take a much more negative attitude to the situation, because the current Avon & Somerset Police “101” incidence line is not able to offer an efficient service.’

Caroline Peters:

‘There hasn’t been change in numbers. In terms of visibility – the aim is to operate in smarter way. The geography of the area is challenging with the resources we have. We have to be more dynamic and it is all based on demand. We have got five neighbourhood officers and PCSOs for Radstock and similar for Keynsham. Resources are still there to deal with local community. There is still strong police presence there. But what officers might be dealing with may not be visible to all. They may be dealing with another community issue elsewhere but their presence is still very much there.’

Simon Boraston:

‘My questions relate mainly to the re-location of the Enquiry Office as I understand the police officers that are left in Bath will be re-locating to new premises in Bath.

The re-location of the Enquiry Office to the One Stop Shop would seem a rather short sighted, inappropriate, peculiar choice. I realise that this 'works' in other areas but Bath is unique and I am not so sure that this is suitable for Bath.

Bath is a city with an ever expanding student population with thousands of visitors/tourists each year, which makes it a very busy city. I also understand that over the next few years there will be further significant investment and development in the city. These facts themselves make Bath unique and not comparable to other much smaller, less busy locations where the Enquiry Office 'co-locates'. Having chatted to the ladies in the Enquiry Office I have found that the office is very busy (it

certainly was when I was there), and deals with 600-800 customers a week, depending on the time of year.

I also discovered that the Enquiry Office deals with a lot more enquiries than people may realise. It is not merely a receptionist's job; they are a kind of triage system for the officers on the ground.

They deal with many and varied enquiries, these are some examples that are dealt with on a regular basis; Collision recording, crime recording, registration of foreign nationals, registration of sex offenders, recording of evidential property, initial reports of Missing people, domestic, homophobic, racist incidents, seizure of firearms and other explosives to be made safe, court bail and many others.

I am not sure how the above police enquiries can really fit alongside Council enquiries, how suitable is this? Sex offenders registering with young mums paying their council tax? What happens when firearms are handed in, would they be carried through the One Stop Shop? It was not long ago that The Bomb Disposal Unit was spotted outside the Police Station, what would happen if an explosive is handed in to the One Stop Shop, would you have to evacuate the building?

On a separate note, where is the thought about victims of crime in all this? The Police and Crime Commissioner is advocating victim care, a victim having to wait in a very public area and then not be able to have an initial private conversation with a member of the police is not thinking of the victim at all. It can take victims a lot of courage to report an incident and I believe that attending a One Stop Shop may put them off reporting and asking for help.'

The Chairman said In respect of the Police enquiry desk moving into the Bath One Stop Shop, the Customer Services response is -

"The Bath One Stop Shop is one of the options currently being discussed with the Police as a potential location for their enquiry desk however no decisions have yet been confirmed."

Caroline Peters:

'It's a very good question. We are working jointly with the Council. It is absolutely important that we are victim and customer focused and we make sure that if we deal with anything that is sensitive then we will provide privacy that those individual require. It is absolutely right to enable safety around our enquiry offices which place invaluable place around policing. We will have to put a protocol on who can be seen. Working with Council has advantages.'

The Chairman invited Councillors and public to ask questions.

Councillor Rob Appleyard:

'£46m savings – over what period that is and what percentage of that is for this area? One team work – how much of police has been suitable for civilian support and how often that is reviewed? How other of your colleagues feel about the change and are there anything on your wish list?'

Caroline Peters:

'Money savings started three years ago with another three years to go. We are working really hard with an excellent team to try to look at ways where we need to reduce services where it will cause the least impact on our service delivery to the community. I personally have high regard for our financial team and the change programme to try to achieve those savings. We looked intelligently through the operating model. We now have police working in roles that they have never worked before. We have staff working in investigating roles, victim and witness programmes, etc. I am very grateful for efforts and support that police staff are making in areas that previously were not seen as police officer roles. This was the biggest consultative programme we ever undertook with individuals and teams. It had positive and negative outcomes but we had support teams that worked very hard that balance was not affected, together with other drivers like shifts and pensions. It has all been done in consultative way.'

Councillor Cherry Beath:

'I am very pleased with crime levels in Combe Down have gone down, with excellent PCSOs that we want to retain. But, we had had bank raid in recent months and we would want to be protected from those crimes.'

Caroline Peters:

'I am very conscience that some crimes can still happen and that is why we say that our intelligence is becoming more dynamic. In this case we are talking of home type of explosives which was used for ATM machines and that itself is a high risk for individuals who wanted to commit the crime and, more importantly, to members of the staff and public. We are getting successful outcomes from our intelligence on those types of crimes.'

Councillor Dave Laming:

'I represent the community along the river, as River Champion, and at the last weekend we had another death in the river. My real concern is that we had five deaths in the river for the last 12 months. I think there are more deaths in the river than on M4 for the last 12 months. We are talking through Strategic Group to put phone boxes for people to place calls to someone. My real question is – where is the integration in your model with the river community, and particularly the safety aspect of it? We need facilities.'

Caroline Peters:

'It is incredibly sad when a loss of life happens, and particularly in rivers. We are talking with all partners, including the River Board. It is important to work close with others. Lessons will be learned from the response and what happened. We have to be more co-ordinated and to be led by people around the river, with right resources for a quick response. I have confidence that agencies and people will be engaging in conversations in what the response would be if those incidents happen again. There are a number of ways to prevent anyone else becoming a victim, but we have to have conversations and work in partnership with other agencies.'

Norman Pascal:

'It is a difficult one for us – every time we had a death in the river, the police is called. We are the wrong people to call. They should ring the fire brigade instead. From safety perspective – I am over to discuss with anyone any suggestions on how to

keep people safe. People around the river need to lead on what we need to do to make the river safe. We need to understand what the contributing factor to those incidents was. We have done some research with other cities that have river flowing through, and with significant night time economy, and they are experiencing the same problems like we do. People want to sit down and watch the river, the weirs, etc. We need to understand what we can do to prevent accidents, and how much more we can do to keep people safe. If we can have lifeboats, we could have them secured.'

Councillor Vic Pritchard:

'We have a police house in Compton Marin that has been made operational, which received a support from Sue Mountstevens. It's a wonderful asset to public, so will you keep it as an operational unit?'

Caroline Peters:

'At the moment there are no undue pressures to close it.'

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones:

'Demand for your service? You said you wanted to try to intervene early in criminal's career – is there a funding for that model? Is any work done on those hotspots you identified?'

Caroline Peters:

'Model has been successful in terms of the early intervention. I am confident with the model as we are held as the Best Practice across the country. We are far more joined up now with probation, social services, etc. You are right about the numbers – we have approximately 15,000 less victims of crime per year, which is quite considerable. We need to modernise police services, to become more dynamic and make an impact in the community. As far as how the model in predicting the crime has been tested – we only started that journey and with further IT solutions we will become smarter in how we operate.'

Councillor Brian Simons:

'With all the changes in the budget, what is the general health of the staff, in particular stress related illnesses?'

Caroline Peters:

'It is something that it is very important to us to support our staff. Their health and wellbeing is important to us. This is the biggest change that we encountered. We had to move around third of our workforce into new areas or roles. That kind of change could have consequences. I don't know the exact numbers on increase in stress related because that could be related to all sort of things in our role. We have the support mechanisms to help those with early indications of feeling stress. We have been living with this since January last year. There will be always that sense of nervousness when people are moving around. People are getting multiskilled and we will be in a far better place than we were before. But, yes, we need to continue to support our colleagues.'

Julie Trollope (Chair of the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations):

'My question is about fines for illegal pavement cycling.'

Caroline Peters:

'We certainly in our road strategy plan looked at the cycling on pavements and similar and we looked how to deal with the safety of those in cars and bicycles and public. This all comes down to our engagement with the community on these particular issues. Personally, I think there is a need for education to make pavements safe. We can always ask local support teams to look at those issues, if that is what the public wants. It is a new area and we are working in getting road safety officers to work together with the community to resolve these issues.'

Mark Mitchell:

'I was born in Bath in 1942 and I am true Bathonian. I am concerned about safety of the streets of Bath. For the first sixty years of my life I could walk safely anywhere in Bath. However, over the last few years our streets look unsafe to walk at night. I can no longer walk to canal to Bath because there are groups of people who verbally abuse us. How safe are our streets now with an increase of population of Bath?'

Caroline Peters:

'Bath is a very safe place. Confidence in the force is quite high. Satisfaction in the police is highest. I accept that there are alcohol drinkers due to night time economy but it is an incredibly safe place. If there are issues then we work close with the Council and other partners because these issues have wider remit – social, etc. Quite often it is not policing issue. I have very good staff that is passionate to work in Bath.'

Mike Mills:

'Western Riverside area is an ex industrial waterway – are there any ladders for people to escape from the river?'

The Chairman commented that there are ladders that come out of the river. There has been an issue in highlighting those ladders. One of the issues, particularly this time of the year, is the flow of the river in comparison to the Thames. The river is now fast flowing. The Chairman said that later on in the day there would be a Panel meeting with River Safety on the agenda.

Councillor Laming added that we do have ladders which were not there initially for the safety but to service the river. Councillor Laming commented that significant money had been set for the safety of the river.

The Chairman thanked everyone who participated at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services