

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Monday, 16th June, 2014

Present:- Councillors Robin Moss (Chair), Cherry Beath (Vice-Chair), Patrick Anketell-Jones, Brian Simmons, Andrew Furse, Dave Laming and David Martin

14 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

15 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Geoff Ward had sent his apologies to the Panel.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

18 POLICE: NEW OPERATING MODEL

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.

The Chairman introduced Chief Superintendent Sarah Crew, from Avon and Somerset Police, and asked her to give a brief introduction on the new Operating Model. The Chairman informed the meeting that Sarah Crew 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.

Sarah Crew took the Panel through the report, as printed in the agenda, explaining its background and proposals for the New Operating Model. Sarah Crew also introduced Chief Inspector Norman Pascal (Local Policing Area Commander) and Dave Harley (Head of Estates and Accommodation).

Questions:

Councillor Robin Moss - 'If the Police station at Radstock is no longer used, can the building be made available for community ownership & use?'

Sarah Crew – 'I can't talk specifically for Radstock but we are absolutely committed to enable our buildings for community use.'

Councillor Cherry Beath –

'1) What do you see as the challenge in operating the new model?

2) Police presence in the City and outlying areas of the City, is very important, can you reassure us that this will not be diminished in the new operating model?

3) Can you outline the access available by the public / "opening hours" and plans for accommodation?'

Sarah Crew – 'I think that managing people through the change is one of the challenges. The next challenge is changing behaviour of people and embedding that into the new operating model. The third challenge would be to make another £23m as constabulary, and to make that before the end of 2017/18. This will be quite challenging to do though I am confident that we are taking the right approach to it.

Police presence in the city will not be diminished. There is no reduction in terms of local policing or patrol officers or PCSOs. There will be more officers on the streets with the new model. Not only that numbers will be safeguarded but they will be more visible.

Recently we started a review on how people are using offices and when the public needs offices and that gave us more understanding on opening hours. That ties in with the changes in our status.'

Councillor Andrew Furse - 'I want to raise questions as to the degree of accommodation facilities, the ability to run the city centre operation from there and the opening times that the public can get access to the police as a point of contact/front desk?'

The current one-stop shop does not have the facilities or the opening times under which the current police station operates, although its location is ideal. If other locations are being sought then the 'travel time' to and from the city centre needs to be considered.

I also need assurance that the new custody facility in Keynsham will not take officers and PCSOs away from city centre operation when dealing with individuals.'

Sarah Crew – 'In terms of accommodation in city centre – we just unveiled new Estate Strategy where it says 'where we close Police Station in the city centre, then we will open something else locally' to meet the needs of the community and population. That is the commitment of the PCC and Chief Constable. With intention to open custody centre in Keynsham there is no need to keep the building in Bath,

with custody suit, open considering financial challenges that we have. We are actively looking to carry out that pledge in every station that we close. Opening times – review that just took place showed that our current opening hours were confusing to the public. So, we are trying to be very clear in our new strategy in terms of which stations are open at what times. People can use Facebook, Twitter or email to contact us as well as phone.

Travel times were also considered. The way we designed the system is that visible local policing is actually visible local policing delivering the service to the community. That means for peak times we can detain the transport. We have detainee investigation teams in each of the custody centres and their task is to deal with detainee rather than taking patrol officers away from doing patrol.

We are investing in investigating support team so patrolling team can patrol in areas that need officers on the ground. You will probably see more of the PCSOs and police officers, not less.'

Councillor David Martin –

'1) How are neighbourhoods defined, and how will the Neighbourhood Manager work with communities, is this the same as PACT meetings?

2) What lessons are being learnt from the pilot projects?

3) What benefits will people see on the ground, especially in response to incidents?

4) How best can Councillors and local organisations such as Residents Associations and community groups get involved in local policing?'

Sarah Crew – 'We haven't changed the definition of neighbouring area, nor we changed how beat managers and PCSOs are aligned by areas. What we have done, we said we will work more closely together with the PCSOs and beat managers. There is no operational need for us to have PCSOs at 4am in the morning. The role of the neighbourhood manager is a dedicated role.

Lessons have been learned from the pilot project – the pilot in South Gloucestershire area had just finished and we will compare that experience with B&NES. The lessons so far are that we are working more as a team; we are sharing a lot more information. Much more joined up working. Also, we are seeing less and less delayed calls by having more people on streets.

I have been asked by B&NES if we could start doing the pilot now.'

Norman Pascal – 'I am keen to start this pilot in B&NES. It was a success in South Gloucestershire.'

Sarah Crew – 'There will be more people visible on the ground and it will be much more informed resolution. One of the feedbacks from local partners was that it is a lot easier to work with one neighbourhood manager.

How everyone else can get involved –the PACT meetings are absolutely a core to the way we do things and to respond quicker. There are opportunities for people

who represent communities to be critical friends to us, which is of real benefit to us. Also, cadet scheme gave us the opportunity to get in touch with younger people.

Councillor Michael Evans 1) Will there be any special provision for dealing with anti-social behaviour, particularly the sort of 'bad neighbour' situation which blights lives over long periods?

2) With the closure of large, remote suburban police 'fortresses', will the Force be taking the opportunity to get closer to the community and its needs by having small police posts where people gather, especially shopping centres, town centres, and some housing estates.

3) The opportunity to spread information and make contact via the Internet is a major plus in the modern environment, which the Police increasingly recognise. But does the Avon and Somerset Constabulary also recognise the need to provide the public with face-to-face contact in a predictable place, such as a Police Post (small office in a larger building such as The Hollies, Lewis House, or The Galleries shopping centre), or does it intend to make the public rely on remote contact by telephone, email etc ?

Sarah Drew - 'I spoke about some of our solutions to tackle anti-social behaviour, local policing and neighbourhood manager. One of our long-term solutions is to reduce the demand on our services. It is much better to identify problems before they become big problems and we deal with them early, so they do not become long-term issue. What we are doing now is something called Integrated Offender Management. We have done this quite successfully with certain types of offenders and we have seen massive reduction in crime. We are looking to take the same approach with offenders who cause long term and high impact anti-social behaviour and identify them much earlier in that path. Offender management is one way of doing that and neighbouring manager has a big role to play. The second aspects are victims. I dealt with chronic instances of anti-social behaviour and there will be a focus on how we deal with victims of anti-social behaviour. We will have to identify victims early so we can deal with the problem and look into ways how to help them.

It is our aim to get as close as possible to the community. If residents associations and Councillors want to help us with the new mode then we will be happy to have discussions.'

Dave Harley - 'The issue of police posts is that we have a lot of them across the area. We will be looking to get to the right size facilities for the new operating model.

When the property becomes available then it will be open, under the Localism Act, for community to bid on it. My issue is how much value I would get so I can invest in new ones. '

Adam Reynolds - In light of the recent 20MPH limits placed on multiple roads in Bath, I understand enforcement of these new restrictions is not going to be done by the police. Is there a way for community groups to help enforce these zones? In particular would there be a way for a community group to measure vehicle speed,

take video evidence and submit this to the police, not to prosecute the driver, but to have the police have a word with the driver?

Should speed violations be very high, what does a community have to do to get the council to start enforcing speed restrictions?

As an example, Chaucer Road (Bear Flat) has excessive speeding along it by parents (irony of this is ridiculous) dropping their children off in the morning at Beechen Cliff. This has been a 20MPH zone for years. Council has never enforced any of the speed restrictions along here.'

Norman Pascal - 'We don't have resources to enforce 20mph. However, we are having a number of schemes, like Community Speed Watch, which could identify individuals who were speeding in the area. Those individuals, once identified, would receive a letter from the police about speeding at those areas.'

Anne-Marie Jovicic Sas – 'Please can you ensure that published crime figures for Radstock (you will need to get the name right from our recent town council emails) are published on the police website on a year-by-year basis so that we can all make informed decisions about their interpretation?'

Sarah Drew - 'We just re-launched our website in order to make it more accessible and we will have year by year comparisons. You will receive personal response on this matter'.

Richard Daniel – 'The police can and do make a real difference to our city.

B&NES claims that walking & cycling are the priorities in transport terms.

Yet for pedestrians the pavements are too often used as an extension for car, van and lorry parking on or across.

Speaking to council they say contact the police, contacting the police say contact the council. Either way there is a lack of clarity to who is responsible and who will take action.

Will the police make a clear agreement for rigorous enforcement?

Cyclists are the most vulnerable road users, unlike drivers they do not have crush zones or a metal safety cage and unlike pedestrians are not provided with a safe space separated from the motor vehicles.

Yet it too commonly seems acceptable to vilify them, and sometimes the attitude and actions of drivers verge on bullying.

We were told at a Cycle Summit by Steve Mildren (now retired) that if we reported bad or dangerous driving to the police that they would speak to the driver.

I rang 101 when a driver obviously made the point by very intentionally driving so close I could easily be knocked off, and the police said they could do nothing unless seen by an officer or witness and taken to court.

Personally I just wanted the driver spoken to.

Will the police reinstall the system where driver will be contact to be made aware of their actions if contacted by a cyclist?

The police have made a public point of targeting cycling on pavements.
What are the numbers of cyclists in Bath that have been stopped or spoken to for cycling on pavements?
What are the numbers of drivers that have been stopped or spoken to for driving dangerously in relation to cyclists?

When it comes to cycling on pavements the police need to look at the DfT figures which show that almost all injury on pavements is caused by vehicles not cyclists. Obviously really dangerous cycling on or off the pavement needs to be dealt with. Most of the time cycling on the pavement is safe if done slowly with care when there are not too many or no pedestrians.
Until safe space for cycling has been built into our city the police need to be sympathetic to the most vulnerable road users, especially children, young people and women.

How many of the nearly one injury a week of a cyclist by a vehicles results in a prosecution?

Sarah Crew - 'There are number of issues raised. It is a problem and neighbouring manager, together with other agencies, will be looking into it.'

Norman Pascal - 'The parking issue is for Local Authority though obstructions are police issue and we will deal with it. In the past, people contacted neighbouring policing team with details of the vehicle in question, and the driver had a letter from us. I am more than happy to reinstate that.
We are focusing on educating cyclist, not to penalise them but to protect them from those reckless drivers.'

David Redgewell - 'I hope you will continue your operations on Friday and Saturday nights and also that conversation with the British Transport Police is taking place considering that they are through their reconfiguration'.

Sarah Crew – 'From constabulary point of view we should only see enhancements in available resources for Friday and Saturday nights. Norman Pascal will give an assurance that commitment will continue.'

Norman Pascal – 'On Friday and Saturday nights we enhanced Police presence in Bath city centre and that will continue to be the case'.

The Chairman (on behalf of Paulton resident and Councillor Liz Hardman) – 'Question about use of technology as a method of improving policing. How modern IT technology could be used in areas with poor mobile reception and slow broadband speed? How will officers carry heavy IT equipment and body armour with them?'

Sarah Crew – 'The approach taken was about simple business methodology. We looked at the processes we needed to deliver to the community. We are also looking to equip our people with the right skills and abilities to do the job and make sure they are there at the time where mostly needed. We need to make sure that they have customer focused behaviour, public focused behaviour, to be able to deliver that in a way you would expect for service to be delivered and you need to give them the tools to be able to do the job. And that is where the technology comes in. In

previous times we haven't always given people the tools to work everywhere and do their job most effectively. So, within the work that I done, I tried to understand where we got it wrong in the past but I am also doing a lot of work on what technology we need for future. That will mean that our officers would not need to carry around laptops or similar heavy equipment. With standard mobile technology there is ability to give people information they need, where they are, to deliver better service to the public. We are looking into enhancing our technology but only to enable our people to do the job that we want them to do, for you. As far as body armour goes – it is an officer's choice on whether to wear body armour or not. There are some places and times when it's absolutely right for them to make risk assessment to wear it. There are other times when it's absolutely not necessary for people to wear it. It is up to a personal choice based on the risk assessment. It is not that everyone must wear it. Sometimes that body armour feels like forbidding members of the public to approach an officer. It is not a stipulation, it is a risk assessment'.

Councillor Andy Furse - 'I fully understand the issue with the current building; that the custody is not used and one of the floors is not used at all; and it is massively oversized building and maintenance heavy building for your needs - but what has been presented to the city at the moment, and what the residents think is that you will move to the One Stop Shop in Manvers Street. As a point of contact that is fine location but that in no way could meet the needs of your officers, at the city centre team, plus for the others who are with vehicles. My question is where your location would be if you have been looking for one and would it meet the needs of officers? It is the practicality of the location that I am most concerned for.'

Dave Harley - 'We have been looking for some time for the right location and we have been to a number of potential sites. The One Stop Shop location for the Stronger Safer Neighbourhood Team has been evaluated now. It is certainly not the place to run 'blues and twos' from there if you are going to respond, just for a couple of neighbouring vehicles. I guess the other aspect of it is anywhere right in the centre of Bath might be an issue considering the congestion in traffic, so closer to the outskirts of Bath would be more appropriate for 'blues and twos'. We did find a facility on Lower Bristol Road, but unfortunately, on that venue we were not successful. We are now looking into some other potential sites.'

Norman Pascal - 'The most important thing for me is that neighbouring police team, PCSOs, beat managers...have to remain in Bath city centre somewhere. Where that might be One Stop Shop, or else, it will have to be in the city centre. However, because we have to operate longer hours there has to be some negotiations on allowing us to set something to suit our and community needs. The 'blues and twos' brigades should be somewhere on outskirts of Bath. I do not think they need to be in the city centre, like how it was set for Bristol, for example.'

Councillor Dave Laming - 'I still believe that you should be on the ground and that we, the public, should see you. I cannot remember when was the last time I saw a police officer, or two of them, walking the streets of Lambridge and Larkhall. In terms of proportionality - I find it very difficult to compare Bristol and us. I find the perception of the police will diminish. What public consultation have you undertaken to convince the public that you are doing the right thing?'

Sarah Crew – ‘We have no intention of not having police presence in Bath. The second thing to say is about comparison to Bristol. Dave’s work is on all of our estates. The fact that we are opening that we are opening three very large buildings mean that all of our estates are looked at. Just because there are a number of police stations in Bristol and Somerset it doesn’t meant that we will have a number of police officers. Number of police stations in different areas is probably not the right thing to have. As far as usage of those three buildings goes, there is a mantra that we use – we operate as one team. You should expect the same level of service from each of the teams. You would be processed in the same way, whether you come from B&NES area, or South Glos. We want to be lot more flexibly to use our resources effectively.

In terms of the public consultation – we consulted quite widely to get to our service promise. Once we came up with it, we went to another public consultation to talk about ‘do you think this is right?’ and get our feedback. We consulted with as much possible as we can, even with the hard to reach communities. We are waiting for surveys in South Gloucestershire. It took some investment to do the consultation, around 5,000 people.’

Councillor Brian Simmons – ‘I accept that custody suits are a good idea as it release police officers to go back to. If we are looking for police basis, we have quite a lot of redundant public conveniences that could be used as police stations. In terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour team – I understand that you made some officers redundant and I was wondering if that means that you will shut down that team.’

Sarah Crew – ‘In terms of the local basis – my colleagues noted your comment. It is quite a good idea. In terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour – we are not making any reductions but we are trying to make it more standardised. We need to set how the ASB support is delivered in local area. In terms of reductions I can only think on one post, in Bristol, that was put in risk. And that is because we are investing that resource elsewhere.’

Councillor Patrick Anketell-Jones – ‘In the new model it says – “...new research identified several persistently high demanding community hotspot areas across the force...” There is the potential when you focus police effort on one spot that you can raise tensions on the community in that area. How will you assure not to become heavy handed?’

Sarah Crew – ‘By solving the problem with the community. Our mantra with this is that we don’t want to come in and say “this is the way we want to solve the problems”. We want to come in, through the neighbouring managers in that area and talk to the community and partners, and using our tested ID Partners problem solving, together identify what the problems are and together identify what the resolutions are, and then share our response. The enforcement role of the Police has a part to play, but it is only a part, often as short term part. The way we prevent any kind of heavy handed policing is by being part of the partnership which involves the community and should be led by the community. Our ultimate role is to create the conditions where society and community thrive. We have got a part to play and be able to do that but, from my own experience, the best way to deal is to bring parties to the table, identify the problem and support the community to make their own decisions’.

Peter Duppa Miller – ‘I am not aware how your contracts in terms of engagements are but are you finding it difficult if the terms of engagements preclude moving your resources to work different hours and different days?’

Sarah Crew – ‘There are different terms and conditions for Police officers and Police staff. We have had a formal consultation with Unison and Police Federation. The process was slightly different for each in terms of length of consultation. They are lengthy processes but not difficult. In terms how easy for individuals that is, there is a need in managing that change for them, by explaining the business case. On that basis they were loud and clear by saying that when it was busy there was no enough people around, hence why we will be making changes in shift patterns. It is all on track and it will kick in soon. During the pilot some people volunteered to change their shift patterns without a proper notice.’

Peter Duppa-Miller – ‘Assuming that other forces around us are doing much the same with reduction of funding, etc., will the constabulary in future be able to draw on other forces in the case of major incident?’

Sarah Crew – ‘You are right to say that other forces are facing reduction in funding though not necessary their approach is the same as ours. However, in terms of our arrangements for what we call mutual aid, which is how we brigade together for public emergencies or major incidents or major investigations, those processes are well embedded and regularly tested. Whilst reductions were made across the board there is a regular oversight on national coordination level to brigade the resources at any given time. For the events like Olympics, like the upcoming NATO summit, we are able to brigade our resources when we need to. On a more medium term basis all forces are looking into ways to collaborate with other forces to deal with some of the highly complex but less numerous offences, for instance the investigation of homicide or counter-terrorism. We are all engaged to contribute to share resources.’

Peter Duppa-Miller – ‘The Connecting Communities initiative – how the new Model will mesh with this initiative?’

Norman Pascal – ‘From B&NES perspective – I see it in a way that neighbouring inspector and beat teams will be facilitating that process and it will stay the same.’

Peter Duppa-Miller – ‘When the Keynsham Connecting Communities takes place it will be neighbourhood manager for B&NES who will sit at the top table?’

Norman Pascal – ‘We haven’t moved to the new model into B&NES. Whilst we are still in the same model it will be the inspector for Keynsham. If we do move to the new model, then it will be neighbourhood manager.’

Peter Duppa-Miller – ‘How can Parish and Town Councils in B&NES help with this process?’

Sarah Crew – ‘Communication is really important. When people hear that police service will make reduction, it is easy to think that there will be reductions in a number of police officers. What we try to build here is that there are no reductions in PCSOs, beat managers, and we will be protecting neighbourhood policing and local

policing. The savings are coming from back office and in managerial reduction. My plea is to use the communication between us.'

Norman Pascal – 'We will engage with your local officers. They know exactly what we will offer and what the local needs are. I suggest for you to engage with local staff, beat manager, etc., and talk to them.'

Councillor Eleanor Jackson – 'I can appreciate old model has gone and thinking about appropriate model for the 21st century. But, people like police presence on streets. It occurs to me that you will need front desk presence in Radstock and Westfield and could I suggest that you can use Radstock Co-Operative store for front desk. Chief Executive of the Co-op thinks it would be very good idea.'

Sarah Crew – 'We will take that offer. Thank you.'

Councillor Vic Pritchard – 'Can you say what commitment you will have towards rural areas?'

Sarah Crew – 'Currently, our beat managers and PCSOs are committed to rural areas and we plan no changes, and no retraction at all. But we want to target the problems in rural communities and we will try to make the most efficient use of resources we have to be able to deliver our service promises. That is why we safeguarded resources to the cities and rural areas. The demand for cities is higher in certain days of the week but there are a lot of times when there is a demand in rural area, and we will bring our resources to tackle that issue. We are asking the public in NE Somerset if this is working.'

Norman Pascal – 'Sue Mountstevens actually put together the Rural Crime Team to focus purely that rural crime is not missed.'

The Chairman thanked everyone who participated in the debate and in particular to Chief Superintendent Sarah Crew and her team.

The meeting ended at 4.50 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services