



CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

24 November 2011

1. MEETING

The Authority last met on 22 July 2011. A special meeting was also held on 26 September 2011.

Set out below are some of the main issues that were discussed.

2. 2010/11 REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN

The Authority's tight control of the police budget has saved money and placed the Force in a good position to tackle ongoing funding and performance challenges.

At the end of the 2010-11 financial year the total budget of £101.821m had been under spent by £0.666m. This was achieved despite an in-year funding cut of £1m and illustrates that Authority and Force have a firm grip on the financial reins.

This money will now be placed in a Performance and Change Reserve to support the transformational change programme that is taking place over the next four years.

The Authority had previously voiced concerns about the cost of overtime and set a challenging reduction target. This target, by the end of the year, had been exceeded without negatively impacting on performance. Indeed, notable performance improvements have been witnessed over the last six months, which members were keen to see sustained.

The Authority has carefully examined last year's figures and proposals for the future and are confident that the Force will be able to deliver the required £6.2M efficiency savings in the coming year. The Authority's Performance Scrutiny Committee will consider any implications to performance, but we believe that the new ways of working, allied with the extended collaboration programmes, will deliver the goods financially and practically in terms of improved levels of service.

This year's strategic policing plan is designed to enable the Force to meet the challenges that we face and improve the delivery of the local police service

3. PERFORMANCE

Members of the Performance Scrutiny Committee are pleased with the direction of travel for Force performance.

A two-month performance snapshot reveals 277 fewer crimes were recorded (-4%) in the county between April and May compared to the same period last year. This is below the county's average for the past five years and is close to a five-year low.

The police recorded 800 fewer incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) between April-May 2011 which represents a reduction of 12% compared to last year. The figures provide early evidence that the Force is continuing to achieve success with its local and neighbourhood policing strategy which has already driven down ASB by 13% in the past 12 months.

There were also three fewer victims of burglary per day in the county in the first two months of the year following a -23% drop in these offences compared to the same time last year.

Meanwhile, the Force's burglary detection rate continued to improve and is close to the force's target of 17%. This enabled the Force to improve its national ranking for burglary detections by three places to 33rd.

In addition, robbery levels between April-May 2011 fell by 10% compared to the same period last year which represents 14 less victims in the county while vehicle crime continues its long-term downward trend, matching the national picture.

The Force is facing a year of unparalleled change which includes the implementation of an entirely new policing model in October of this year. It is also facing a severe financial shortfall over the next four years which is placing added pressure on the force to identify savings in spending. Despite this, our performance expectations remain challenging and we continue to set ourselves ambitious targets both locally and nationally to deliver top quality policing for the people of Bedfordshire.

The Force has outlined a series of action plans detailing how it can continue to impact on key crime areas such as ASB, serious acquisitive crime and the most serious violence offences which we fully endorse and will monitor closely to ensure we are achieving our aims. In addition now that the Integrated Offender Management initiative is in place the Authority hopes that that the partnership

project which aims to manages repeat reoffending will meet the performance expectations by reducing reoffending by 8% this year and 18% next year.

The Force is also looking at further ways of improving service to victims of crime to increase overall satisfaction with the Force. New figures show that eight out of ten victims of crime in Bedfordshire (80.5%) are satisfied with the overall service provided by the Force, an improved performance thanks to higher satisfaction rates between January and March this year. Members, are keen to improve the rate even further and push closer towards its goal to achieve 83% by the end of 2011/12.

Performance in relation to 'follow-up' satisfaction rates among victims of crime in the county has however fallen to 64.2%, which places the Force 42nd nationally. Members have challenged the Force to focus on improving follow-up actions which form a key component of overall satisfaction rates. As a result, Bedfordshire Police has agreed to set up a new tasking group chaired by Deputy Chief Constable John Fletcher to look at ways of addressing the problem.

The Force has also recently implemented a number of initiatives to improve customer service standards. New customer-friendly letters have been produced which enable officers to keep victims informed of the progression and completion of cases while a greater number of email addresses are being collected to help speed up communication.

In addition, contact made with victims is being recorded as a matter of routine on the Crime System and better systems introduced created to monitor staff compliance with the Victims Code of Practice.

4 BEDFORDSHIRE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HERTFORDSHIRE COLLABORATION

Members will recall that during April and May 2011, the three Police Authorities, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire agreed to a Strategic Alliance Agreement, for which the key deliverables are set out as follows:

- Cashable savings of between £15m and £20m annual savings by the end of 2015/16.
- Equal or improved effectiveness for forces.
- Improved efficiencies in forces, realising non cashable saving for re-investment.
- A service structure and operating methods which are 'fit for purpose', taking account of new and emerging developments and which will meet future, foreseeable demands for the next 3 – 10 years.
- Plans which close the gaps identified within the respective Protective Services Improvement Plans.

- Methods of operating which are equally viable under any force or governance structure.
- Improved and enhanced customer service across the three counties.

To date the Authority has approved an outline business case for a staged implementation of a joint Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire ICT Department. Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire had recently formed a joint ICT unit in December 2010 the extension of the collaboration to include Cambridgeshire would support the national agenda for the delivery of ICT in policing and ensure that the current levels of duplication between the two ICT departments would be streamlined. The new unit is expected to achieve savings in the region of £3.6M over the next five years.

Business cases for a tri-force collaboration in four areas of Protective Services namely: Major Crime (MCU), Professional Standards (PSD) Firearms and Scientific Services (SSU) have also been approved.

These business cases provide efficiencies for the 3 forces of £2.551m increasing to £3.051m by 2014/15, with set up costs likely to be in the region of £0.937m. It is anticipated that with go live dates prior to April 2012, that the majority of those savings will be fully realisable in 2012/13. The table below provides the overall level of savings achieved through the implementation of the business cases. These savings will be realised whilst also improving capability and capacity, and importantly, resilience in Bedfordshire.

Efficiencies and Set up Costs Summary

Unit	Total Savings	Likely Set Up Costs
	£000	£000
Firearms	542	86
MCU	700	470
SSU *	672	296
PSD	637	105
Total	2,551	957

* A further £500k will be delivered by April 2014, providing overall savings of **£3.051m** in these four business areas.

5. TRANSITION FROM POLICE AUTHORITIES TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Authority has welcomed the end of the uncertainty over plans to introduce directly-elected Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs) now that the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill has received Royal Assent. Royal Assent, which means that the Bill is now an Act of Parliament, was granted on 15 September 2011 and will see police

authorities abolished in favour of a new governance structure.

During the last stages of the debate there was one major change to the Bill which has delayed elections for the new PCCs until November 2012 instead of May next year, leaving police authorities with more time to get ready for the handover.

The Police Authority is determined that the transition to the new arrangements is as smooth and seamless as possible and does not undermine the recent improvements in performance and public satisfaction in the county.

We have already undertaken crucial groundwork, including the pioneering collaboration programme, to ensure the newly-elected PCC inherits a financially sound, efficient organisation on which to build.

The Authority has established a Transition Programme Board to oversee the transition from police authorities to police and crime commissioners. Discussions have taken place with Local Authorities and other agencies to determine their appropriate representation on the Board and Bedford Borough have confirmed their representatives in relation to the work streams dealing Community Safety, Elections and the Police & Crime Panel. The Police Authority held a workshop in September to discuss the actions that partners need to do in preparation for the PCC.

6. NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE (NPAS)

The Authority has endorsed, in principle, the proposal for a National Police Air Service. (NPAS). This will mean the end of the current provision of air support through the Chiltern Air Support Unit (CASU) although the base at Henlow would not close before July 2013 at the earliest.

The proposed service aims to provide 97% of the population with an air support within a 20 minute range and be available 24/7. The NPAS is expected to save approximately 22% in costs of air support nationally, equating to approximately £220K per year for Bedfordshire.

The option endorsed by the Authority aims to deliver air support from 23 aircraft over 20 bases, supported by the establishment of national/regional management structures.

The proposal for NPAS had been endorsed by Chief Constables across England and Wales. Police Authorities are now being consulted on the proposal and if there is full agreement initial stages of implementation are expected to commence from April 2012.

7 MATTERS OF INTEREST SINCE THE LAST MEETING

Since the meeting in July;

- all councillors should have received an update through the Authority's e-zine briefing on the Local Policing Changes and the Leadership Team were briefed by Chief Constable, Chair and Chief Executive at their meeting on 25 August.

PETER HOLLICK
REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY