

19 April 2017

AT A MEETING

of the

BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

held at the offices of Luton Borough Council, Council Chamber, Town Hall, George St, Luton
on the 19th day of April 2017 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Chapman, Central Bedfordshire Council (Chair)

Bedford Borough Council

Councillors Charles and Foster

Central Bedfordshire Council

Councillor Dodwell, Downing and Hollick

Luton Borough Council

Councillors Agleby, Farooq and Saleem

Independent Members

Messrs Cain and Warburton

Ms Z Billingham, Force Inspector, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies (HMIC) and Ms L McCarthy, HMIC Force Liaison Officer attended only for part of Minute Item 58 during which time they addressed the Panel and provided responses to questions from the Panel.

19 April 2017

Ms K Holloway, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Bedfordshire, Mr M Cooper, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Mr J Boucher, Chief Constable (CC), Bedfordshire Police Force attended for Minute Items 58 and 59 only.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Holland (Bedford Borough Council)

55. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUENT COUNCILS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions.

56. MINUTES

The PCC commented that in Minute Item 53, the wording “50% fewer Section 20 referrals” should read “50% fewer Section 136 referrals”.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 6 February 2017 be confirmed subject to replacement of the wording “Section 20” with “Section 136” in Minute Item 53.

57. DISCLOSURE OF LOCAL AND/OR DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Member Disclosing an Interest	Nature of Interest	Present or Absent During Discussion of Item
Councillor Farooq	Local – his niece is a Bedfordshire Police Officer	Present

58. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY (HMIC) INSPECTION

Background

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) had recently carried out an Inspection and published a PEEL Report on the Effectiveness of the Bedfordshire Police Force. The Report had rated the Force 'Inadequate overall' and Bedfordshire was the only Force in the Country to receive that rating.

Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Ms Zoe Billingham and HMIC Force Liaison Officer Linda McCarthy had been invited to attend the PCP meeting to formally present the Report and to answer questions from the Panel on it. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable of Bedfordshire were also present to respond to questions from the Panel.

Some questions had been submitted in advance by members of the Panel and then forwarded to the Inspector and the Commissioner as appropriate prior to the meeting.

Questions to the Inspector of Her Majesty's Constabularies

Introduction

HMI Ms Billingham began by explaining that she had been the Inspector of the Bedfordshire Force for over 7 years. She was also responsible for 15 other Forces. Her colleague Ms McCarthy was the Force Liaison Officer for Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire and would therefore be able to comment on collaboration between these three Forces.

Ms Billingham explained that the aim of HMIC was to build strong enduring relationships and to work together with each Force with the common aim of improving the Policing service to the public. The Inspection process usually involved an inspection in the Spring to assess Legitimacy and Efficiency and a further inspection in the Autumn to assess the overall operational Effectiveness of the Force.

The Inspections covered all areas of operation from neighbourhood policing through to serious crime and potential terrorist attacks. Each inspection lasted a week, involving ten Inspectors and resulted in an Assessment Report.

History of Inspections since 2011

The Panel asked the Inspector what confidence she had that the Bedfordshire Force was now on the right track to achieve a better rating once the measures which were already in progress came to fruition and, in particular, what the HMIC needed to see from Bedfordshire Police to demonstrate that it was improving.

Ms Billingham responded that she had no doubt as to the commitment and dedication of the PCC and Chief Constable (CC) but she could not say with confidence that the public of Bedfordshire were being well served by the Force.

She explained that she had been carrying out Inspections of the Bedfordshire Force for over 7 years and had worked with four different Chief Constables. In July 2012 the government's austerity measures had resulted in 20% cuts to Police Forces. The grant to Bedfordshire Police had been cut by £19 million. Other Forces had had cuts which were proportionally greater but arguably the cuts were more challenging for Bedfordshire which, as a smaller force, could not take advantage of economies of scale. It was also recognised that Luton provided complex challenges for a small and otherwise rural Force.

An HMIC Inspection in 2013 had identified that Bedfordshire was not taking a strategic response to the cuts and, instead, was allowing its Neighbourhood policing service to dwindle by not filling vacancies. The Inspection Report had noted that this was an unwise approach as research had shown neighbourhood policing to be a fundamental part of preventative policing. The Report had warned that failure to invest in neighbourhood policing would result in future problems.

Further Inspections in July 2014, November 2014 and May 2015 had continued to report on failings to reinforce neighbourhood policing.

In October 2015 the Inspector had been informed that plans were in place to reintroduce neighbourhood policing by March 2016. However Inspections in the Spring and Autumn of 2016 had revealed that these plans would not be fully implemented until April 2018 and this was felt to be unacceptable.

It was because of this history and the length of time it would take for plans to come to fruition that the Inspector had felt it necessary to rate the Force Inadequate. Consequently she did not feel able to say at this time that she had confidence that the Force would achieve a good rating at the next Inspection.

Further questions from the Panel

In response to further questions Ms Billingham commented that:

- Funding was indeed a challenge that would make it difficult to achieve a 'Good' rating but improvements could still be made and should be aspired towards.
- HMIC Inspections could only report on what needed to improve and make comparisons with other forces. HMIC could not suggest how improvements should be achieved and it was the job of the CC to ensure that there was a correct balance of priorities.
- There was no fundamental difference of opinion between the CC and HMIC. Both accepted that the Force needed to improve and both recognised that preventative policing was fundamental
- She herself worked alongside 4 other Inspectors and 'Inadequate' ratings were always compared with Inspection Reports for other Forces to ensure a consistency of approach. This had shown that the Bedfordshire Force had clear failings in fundamental areas which fully justified the Inadequate rating in comparison to other Forces.
- She was persuaded that the CC and PCC did not underestimate the scale of the task ahead of them. They were both determined to achieve positive results and this demonstrated the maturity of the relationship they had with HMIC.
- Bedfordshire Force had the lowest spend on neighbourhood policing per head of population out of all Forces in the country. Only 2% of Bedfordshire Police Officers were engaged in neighbourhood policing compared to a national average of 18%.
- The Force had historically reacted to issues rather than planning and preparing for prevention of crime. There was a necessity to fully understand the demands on the Force and to make appropriate plans.
- The fundamental nature of neighbourhood and preventative policing was universally agreed and based upon much research carried out by the College of Policing. This did not necessarily mean 'bobbies on the beat' but did require good relationships with communities and community leaders. It may also involve using technology and an online presence.

19 April 2017

- The poor rating for tackling serious and organised crime was due to two factors. The first was a failure to adequately resource intelligence gathering and the second was a failure to fully map serious and organised crime groups within Bedfordshire. The latter had a knock on effect for the gathering of national crime data.
- She was hopeful that the ratings for tackling serious and organised crime and for protecting the vulnerable would be improved for the next Inspection, however it would take longer to improve the performance of neighbourhood policing.
- It could be that, once a proper plan and methodology had been implemented, it may transpire that resources were spread too thinly. However it was still necessary to proceed with thorough planning.
- An unresolved murder from 25 years ago would have no noticeable effect on the current rating of HMIC for a Force.
- The performance of specialist capabilities had deliberately remained ungraded for Bedfordshire and for all other Forces. This had been decided for national strategic reasons, to not draw attention to differences in capabilities in dealing with national threats.

The Inspector concluded that the PCC, the CC and HMIC shared the same aims and objectives. She offered her support and goodwill to the CC and PCC and said that she had no doubt of their commitment to succeed. She also thanked the PCP for providing this opportunity to outline the findings of the Inspection of the Bedfordshire Force by HMIC and hoped it would assist understanding.

Questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police

The Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police were then invited to respond to the Inspector's comments and to her Report, and to respond to questions from the Panel.

Introduction

The Chief Constable began by explaining that the Force was currently undergoing a complete restructuring which included every area of operation and this process would take 18 months to fully complete.

Various consultants and partners had been engaged to help put together a plan to improve community policing and this had already resulted in a new Response Team, improved shift patterns, the new Emerald Team to tackle domestic abuse, the new Sentinel Team to improve rural relations and a new Intelligence function.

19 April 2017

To improve understanding in the Force of vulnerability and child sex exploitation, a victim of abuse from Rotherham would be speaking to the entire Force. Training had also been arranged for the whole Force on understanding domestic abuse.

It was recognised that funding was an issue and that issues in Luton could drain resources. Despite that, the CC believed that the Force could do better and that the Inspections later in 2017 would show improvement. There had already been good results with crime having risen by just 1.3% compared to a national average of 7.8%. Work which had been done in Luton over a long period had dismantled the leadership of Britain First and had resulted in custodial sentences for some 'hate preachers'.

The Commissioner was pleased to report that the Inspector had commented on the plans currently in place, saying they were more credible than any she had seen from the Force previously. All of the Officers currently being recruited would be going directly into Community Policing, though not all to Hubs. The Commissioner confirmed that all 7 Hubs would be fully staffed and operational by April 2018.

The Commissioner commented that HMIC had contrasted Bedford with neighbourhood policing in Durham, however she saw clear differences between the two Forces, not least that Durham received an additional £17 million compared to Bedford. This was an amount that would pay for over 500 additional Officers which equated to increasing the number of Officers in Bedfordshire by almost 50%.

The Commissioner reported that performance figures for dealing with incidents of domestic abuse had already shown improvement since the implementation of the new Emerald team and that the entire £250,000 under-spend from 2016/17 would be put into the Emerald team for 2017/18.

The Commissioner acknowledged that there were serious problems in dealing with missing children and that the County had to manage many children placed in care from other Counties. To respond to this issue, the Force was working closely with Local Authorities and other partner agencies.

The Commissioner concluded her opening statement by reporting that the Policing Minister had described the Chief Constable's 21 page response to the HMIC report as being a "responsible response" to it.

Questions from the Panel

In response to questions from the Panel the Commissioner and Chief Constable responded that:

- It was hoped to achieve better results at the Inspections later in 2017 by using evidence and testimonies gathered from partner agencies that demonstrated actual achievements of the Force.

19 April 2017

- All training for new recruits and Special Officers was carried out jointly with the Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire Constabularies as part of the joint force collaboration.
- Staff in the Control Room were trained internally. This training consisted of 6 weeks of classroom based lessons followed by an 18 month period of Continual Professional Development with tutors. All calls were recorded and call recordings were then used by tutors in development sessions with staff. Additional training included response to a major attack and considering the 'journey of a child' through traumatic circumstances.
- Panel Members were welcome to visit any of the new Hubs and the Panel would be kept informed of progress and any developments.
- In addition to 100 new Officers, a further 45 new Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) were also being recruited.
- The Force made use of various consultancy services to prepare for the HMIC Inspection and to respond to the points made in the HMIC Report. Contact had also been made with the Lancashire and Durham Forces to share best practice.
- An Appeals Board was meeting monthly to look at every recommendation for improvement and to ensure that every task was assigned to an appropriate person who was then accountable for that task.
- To improve performance in protecting vulnerable people, the Force was working with 37 partner organisations. One of the initiatives already implemented was the development of 'Trigger Plans' for 17 young people who were most likely to go missing. Each plan contained information on contact numbers, key relationships and places they were likely to visit.
- Having four different Chief Constables in five years had not been good for stability and planning. The Commissioner and the current Chief Constable were determined to continue to work until real improvements were made and, notwithstanding the radical restructuring that was currently under way, to ensure there was a period of stability to enable the Bedfordshire Force to develop and improve performance.
- Inter-Force collaboration involved some give and take. Some initiatives might benefit one Force more than another but overall Collaboration would continue to bring benefits, make savings and improve resilience.

19 April 2017

- Despite the small size of the Bedfordshire Police Force, it was believed that more could be done and there was a determination to respond positively to the criticisms within the HMIC report.
- The Commissioner would supply the Panel with an Action Plan showing the steps, timescales and milestones which would achieve the improvements required by the HMIC Report.

Community Hubs

In response to a question, the Chief Constable commented that the College of Policing had been advising on development of the Community Hubs.

The Hub locations had been chosen according to three criteria:

- 1) The density of location and ease of accessibility for as many people as possible.
- 2) The best use of Estate resources, including both property owned by the Force and property available through collaboration with other public bodies.
- 3) The best degree of equidistance between the 7 Hubs across the County.

The Chief Constable added that the Hubs were very different to the previous 'Cop Shops' which had been used. Cop Shops had been little more than somewhere for PCSOs to hold surgeries and carry out interviews whereas the Hubs were properly staffed premises where Inspectors, Sergeants and Officers would be based. Each Hub would be open to the public and would have a geographical responsibility. In essence they were closer to previous models of satellite Police Stations although this terminology could not be used as several of them were located within existing Fire Stations.

Information sharing

In relation to Information Sharing with Ward Councillors, the Chief Constable regretted that much of the valuable relationships with local communities had been lost following restructuring in 2012 but this was now being rebuilt. Work was being done to establish lines of communication with community leaders and Ward Councillors. Police Inspectors would be making visits to introduce themselves at Parish Council meetings.

It was hoped that this, along with the new Community Hubs and the work of the new Sentinel Team in rural areas, would rebuild strong Community Engagement links.

Call handling performance

In fulfilment of her commitment made at the Panel meeting of 6 February 2017 (Minute Item 43 refers) the Commissioner produced figures on the performance of the 101 Call Handling Service.

Performance for the Year 2016 / 17 (Total Year)

999 Performance – **88.45%** of calls answered within 10 Seconds

101 Performance – **84.93%** of calls answered within 30 Seconds

Current Performance

999 – April 2017 (month to date) – **86.08%** of calls answered within 10 Seconds (with an aspiration to achieve 90%)

101 – April 2017 (month to date) – **78.09%** of calls answered within 30 Seconds (with an aspiration to achieve 85%)

It was pointed out that those statistics related to the time taken to answer a call once a preliminary automatic message had been played. The automatic message took around 60 seconds and in comparison the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) automatic message took 7 seconds. The CC responded that the FRS was not a comparable service as they received a fraction of the number of calls the Police received but he would look to see if the automatic messages could be shortened.

The Chair concluded this Agenda Item by thanking the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable for their positive response to the questions raised by the Panel and for the determination they expressed to succeed in bringing about the necessary improvements to the Bedfordshire Police Force.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the comments and responses of the Inspector of Her Majesty's Constabularies be noted.
- 2) That the comments and responses of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable be noted.

59. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR BEDFORDSHIRE - UPDATE

The Commissioner presented her report and provided the following additional information.

Breakdown of 100 Additional Officers

To clarify the position on the 100 additional Officers that had been announced at the Panel meeting on 6 February 2017, the Commissioner explained that 90 of these posts were to fill vacancies currently held by the Force and 10 posts were an actual increase in the number of budgeted officer posts. Together, the 10 new budgeted posts and the refilling of 90 vacancies would represent a 10% increase in the number of Officers.

Expenses

With regard to her expenses, the Commissioner expressed her regret that claims had inadvertently been made that did not comply with the Home Office guidance. She explained that she had received no induction from the Home Office and neither the induction pack from the Association of PCC nor the 100-page induction pack she had received from her own office gave any guidance on expenses. Furthermore, neither her current nor her two previous Chiefs of Staff had been aware of the guidance on expenses, which had only been discovered accidentally, following an investigation by Bedfordshire On Sunday newspaper and a subsequent discussion between her and a neighbouring Police and Crime Commissioner.

She confirmed that she had fully repaid all expenses that had been claimed erroneously and which did not comply with the Home Office guidance. This came to £693.73 for the ten month period from when she started until the error had been identified.

She and her Chief of Staff were currently working to ensure that her expenses were fully transparent and accurate and when this was complete the expenses would be published on the appropriate website. They were also checking all other Home Office guidance to ensure that they were aware of and complying with any other guidance which applied to the Commissioner role.

Concern was expressed by the Panel that none of her Chiefs of Staff had been aware of the guidance which was so easily accessible online. It was also pointed out that the Commissioner's expenses that had already been published did not give sufficient details such as the reason for the expense and actual mileage travelled. The Commissioner explained that the mileage for all her travel was calculated from the AA Route-finder website to ensure total accuracy. The Chief of Staff confirmed he would ensure that, once checked and published, all expenses would show full details including the mileage travelled.

19 April 2017

In conclusion the Commissioner thanked the Panel for its positive approach and attitude towards the HMIC Inspector.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the Commissioner's additional information be noted.

60. COLLABORATION

The Panel noted that the 7 questions put to the Commissioner at the Panel meeting of 6 February 2017 had not yet been answered. These were:

- (a) What is currently covered through regional collaboration?
- (b) How is it being governed?
- (c) What are the key aspects of the regional framework?
- (d) Are the planned savings expected from collaboration being achieved?
- (e) Is collaboration delivering operational effectiveness?
- (f) Is there a performance management scorecard?
- (g) Are there business cases for further areas of collaboration?

The Panel heard that the Office of the Commissioner had verbally stated that they did not yet have sufficient information to answer these questions. The Panel felt this was not acceptable and that answers should be provided at the next meeting of the PCP.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report of the PCC be noted.

2. That the PCC be asked to provide a full written response at the meeting on 20 June 2017, to the 7 questions put to her at the Panel meeting of 6 February 2017.

61. ESTATES STRATEGY

RESOLVED:

That the report of the PCC be noted.

62. PANEL'S BUDGET TO 31 MARCH 2017

The Panel considered a report of the Head of Democratic and Registration Services, Bedford Borough Council, relating to information about the grant provided by the Home Office to the Panel's host Authority for administering and supporting the Panel together with expenditure against that budget.

It was explained to the Panel that the item for 'Staff Costs' included appropriate and proportionate amounts for all Officers and senior staff of the Local Authorities who were engaged in work on the Panel while the item for 'Members Allowances' related to remuneration for Panel Members.

The Panel was further informed by Officers that the Panel's budget for 2017/18 had been agreed and remained at the same level as for 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel's provisional outturn budget to 31 March 2017, set out in the report, be noted.

63. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF POLICE AND CRIME PANELS

The Vice Chair informed the Panel that representatives of 25 PCPs had agreed to form a National Association of PCPs and discussions were progressing to achieve this. The Local Government Association (LGA) had subsequently submitted a proposal to fulfil this function by creating an LGA Special Interest Group however his option did not appear to be favoured.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

64. MEETING OF PCP REPRESENTATIVES ON JOINT COLLABORATION (BEDFORDSHIRE, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND HERTFORDSHIRE)

The Vice Chair reported that representatives from each of the three Forces had met and it had been noted that none of the three PCCs had yet answered the 7 questions relating to Collaboration (Minute Item 60 refers).

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

65. EASTERN REGION PCP NETWORK

The Vice Chair reported that the representatives had discussed the new Police and Crime Act 2017 with particular regard to new provisions allowing PCCs to take responsibility for Fire and Rescue Services. The Act also stipulated that complaint appeals would now go to the PCC and this may result in PCPs becoming involved in complaint procedures.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

19 April 2017

66. WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

RESOLVED:

That an 'Away Day' be arranged for Panel Members to further develop the Work Programme for 2017/18.

The meeting closed at 9.32 pm