

## **CUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel held on Tuesday, 25 January 2022 at 10.30 am at Conference Room A/B, Cumbria House, Botchergate, Carlisle, CA1 1RD

### **PRESENT:**

Mr MA Johnson (Cumbria County Council) (Chair)

Mr RK Bingham, Cumbria County Council (Vice-Chair)

Mr KR Hamilton, Barrow Borough Council

Ms R Hunter, Independent Co-opted Member

Mr J Little, Independent Co-opted Member

Mr P McSweeney, South Lakeland District Council

Mr K Meller, Carlisle City Council

Mr A Smith, Allerdale Borough Council

### **Also in Attendance:-**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Ms M Bellis   | - Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner |
| Mrs L Harker  | - Senior Democratic Services Officer  |
| Mr W Johnston | - Group Finance Manager   |
| Ms C Killeen  | - Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Manager                                     |
| Mr R Marshall | - Joint Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner  |
| Mr P McCall   | - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)                                       |
| Ms H Reay     | - Policy and Scrutiny Project Officer                                       |
| Mrs G Shearer | - Deputy Chief Executive - Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner      |
| Mrs M Skeer   | - Chief Constable - Cumbria Constabulary                                    |
| Mr B Spencer  | - Group Lawyer/Deputy Monitoring Officer                                    |
| Ms V Stafford | - Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner              |

### **PART 1 – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

#### **27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Ms D Holden and Mr D Whipp.

## **28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

## **29 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**, that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting for any items of business on this occasion.

## **30 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no items of public participation to be considered at this meeting.

## **31 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**, that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

## **32 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22 - QUARTER 2**

### **(1) Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Budget Report**

The Panel received a report from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided the Commissioner's Financial Summary 2021/22 forecast as at 30 September 2021.

Members received an explanation with regards to the Constabulary underspend of £187k and the PCC underspend of £16k.

The Panel was informed that at this half-way point in the financial year the Capital budget was largely forecast to be close to budget with £6.445m expected to be spent in the year. It was explained that the current forecast showed slippage of £486k into the following financial year. Members noted that most of the planned vehicle replacements were ordered, and deliveries were planned on a weekly basis. In relation to ICT, new agile ways of working needed to be fully reviewed and the impact on the future ICT infrastructure was still to be evaluated

Members were informed of the income and expenditure variances; the Office of the PCC -£14k which included reductions in staffing and other office running costs (£33k) and transport cost (£3k) offset by increases in external audit fees (£22k). The Panel noted Other PCC Budgets -£2k which included reduced expenditure on Premises (£10k) mostly as a

result of reduced expenditure on utilities £7k, rent and rates £23k offset by increased cleaning £20k as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and a reduction in investment income of £8k.

The Panel received an update on the funding provided to the Constabulary -£187k, noting that the forecast Constabulary position for 2021/22 was close to budget. It was explained that the underspend in the main arose from underspends on police staff pay as a result of higher than anticipated vacancy levels and smaller underspends across non-staff related budget lines. Officers explained that those underspends were being offset to a degree by overspends on police officer pay as a result of the Constabulary recruiting ahead of the Operation Uplift target and some pressure being experienced on overtime budgets.

A member drew attention to the reduction in staffing costs; the Police and Crime Commissioner acknowledged this was due to staff vacancies.

It was explained that a business case was being developed which would enable the Commissioner to also be responsible for the governance of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, therefore, it was anticipated the shape and size of staff may change.

## **(2) Cumbria Constabulary Budget Report**

The Panel considered a report which provided details of the Constabulary's Revenue Budget Monitoring 2021/22.

Members were informed that the forecast expenditure outturn on Operation Uplift reflected the recruitment of an additional 51 FTE officers by 31 March 2021 and a forecast additional 47 by 31 March 2022. It was explained that the quoted figures excluded a further £1.223m of expenditure in relation to recruitment of officers over and above the Operation Uplift target and an additional nine Sergeant posts which were forecast to be incurred in 2021/22 and had largely been budgeted for.

The Panel noted that the forecast overspend on police officer pay predominantly related to changes in profiled recruitment of Uplift cohorts, the allocation of two police officer trainers and payments for unsociable hours. It was explained that staffing in support of the additional recruitment and servicing the additional officers underspent by £173k related to reduced staff trainer requirements.

The Panel was informed that the Combined Impact of Operation Lectern was a net reduced cost of £154k which comprised of:-

- Covid related spend £413k,
- less Home Office surge funding of -£489k
- Plus loss of income £118k (policing of events, driver awareness etc.)
- less savings on core budgets £196k (including vehicle hire, vehicle fuel, travel, accommodation and subsistence).

A Member drew attention to the low net capital receipt for the sale of the police house in Milnthorpe and felt this did not reflect the market value of properties in the area. Officers confirmed that a commercial valuation of the property had been undertaken and it had been sold at the open market value. It was agreed that further information would be made available on this matter.

The Panel asked a question regarding the current position on the budget and expected outturn as the report presented the forecast at the end of September. The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the latest position continued to indicate a very close forecast against the budget, possibly moving to a small overspend.

A discussion took place regarding the reported underspend against police staff budgets. The Chief Constable confirmed that all specialist roles had been filled and that vacancies on generalist posts were being managed.

The Panel discussed agile working during the pandemic and how the recent directive from Government would affect this. Officers confirmed that no immediate changes would be made as precautions were still being undertaken, with a mixed economy being considered going forward.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **33 CUMBRIA POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER PRECEPT PROPOSALS**

#### **a Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Forecast**

The Panel considered a report from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided a detailed analysis of the figures contained within the Revenue budget for 2022/23 and the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) to 2026/27.

Members were also provided with a more detailed analysis of the budgets for 2022/23 together with comparative information from the 2021/22 approved budget, as well as additional information in respect of the more unusual aspects of the budget and explanations where the budgets had changed significantly between the years.

The Panel drew attention to the police officer pension scheme and asked how this could be in deficit if there was no fund. Officers confirmed that this was funded by the Home Office explaining that account had to be taken for liabilities.

A detailed discussion took place regarding the different pension schemes which had been in place since 1987. Officers explained that the further reduction in police pension figures from 2023/24 reflected the impact of the tapering change in police pension schemes from 1987 to 2006 which saw a reduction in retirements from approximately 30 per year to almost nil for a 5 year period.

The Panel asked a question regarding the potential impact on the Medium Term budget of the proposals for governance of the Fire Authority. The Commissioner advised that the Business Case had been prepared and will be consulted but that further due diligence would be needed to provide assurance on the financial implications of the proposal. It was explained that in the short-term, should the proposal proceed, the budgets would remain ring-fenced.

A discussion took place regarding the costs incurred for Police doctors and surgeons. Officers confirmed there was a procurement exercise in place within the Force for medical contracts.

A member asked a question regarding the number of police officers in Cumbria and it was confirmed that currently there were 1,120 which would increase by 223 by March 2023.

A positive discussion took place regarding Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) whilst concerns were raised with regards to vacant posts. The Chief Constable explained that a number of PCSOs had been promoted to police officers; the whole model of policing was being looked at with the intention that in the future there would be a mixed economy which would include PCSOs and dedicated beat officers.

The Panel Member representative for Barrow highlighted the fantastic partnership work which was being undertaken in the area and asked that thanks and appreciation be conveyed to Sergeant Proctor.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

**b Draft Capital Programme 2022/23 and Beyond**

Members received a report which provided information on the proposed Capital Programme for 2022/23 and beyond, both in terms of capital expenditure projections and the financing available to fund such expenditure. The Panel noted that the Capital Programme was developed in consultation with the Constabulary who were the primary user of the capital assets under the ownership of the Commissioner.

The Panel asked a question regarding the approach to the gap with the Capital Programme and the extent to which reserves would be considered ahead of a demand on the Revenue budget. The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer confirmed that all options would be considered to avoid any further revenue pressures where possible. It was explained that further clarity on the forecast was expected pending announcements on the Emergency Services Network (ESN). The Chief Constable and Commissioner confirmed that in their view more certainty in respect of the ESN timescales and funding would be likely due to the growing need to implement the project.

**RESOLVED**, that the proposed Capital Strategy for 2022/23 and beyond as part of the overall budget process for 2022/23 be noted.

**c Precept Consultation Responses**

The Panel received a verbal update on the Precept Consultation responses and noted the methodology used.

Members were informed that the consultation had been completed by 1,369 people and returned a 60% approval of the Commissioner's proposed increase to the Council Tax precept.

A member asked a question in respect of the increase in residents engaging in the consultation survey and whether consideration had been given to a newsletter to enhance communications. Officers confirmed that there had been a significant increase in responses to the survey compared to the previous years, and that these were now close to pre-pandemic levels; a newsletter was planned going forward.

A detailed discussion then took place regarding concerns about increased anti-social behaviour in the county with a particular emphasis on the Allerdale area. The Chief Constable acknowledged the issues and informed the Panel that a dedicated community beat had been deployed in the area to try to help overcome the matters. It was agreed that this matter would be discussed further direct with the Member concerned.

**RESOLVED**, that the information be noted.

d **Precept Proposal and Medium Term Budget 2022/23 to 2026/27**

Members considered a report from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided an overview of the medium term financial outlook together with the proposal for the precept that the Commissioner was presenting to the Panel for their views as part of his budget setting process.

The Panel noted that the precept proposal for 2022/23 was for an increase in precept of 3.67%, which was an increase of £9.99 per annum for a band D property and took the total police element of the precept at band D to £285.15.

Members were informed that the net budget requirement comprised expenditure by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary for 2022/23 was £121.009m. It was explained this was the total net expenditure funded externally by income from the Home Office Police Grant and Council Tax and represented a real terms increase of income of 5.12% compared to 2021/22.

A Panel Member asked a question regarding the assumption of a 3.5% pay award; a 1% downward variation in the actual pay award would deliver a benefit of around £1m. It was felt that alongside a small contribution from the budget stabilisation reserve, this could potentially alleviate the need to increase Council Tax during what was likely to be a very difficult financial year for many residents.

The Commissioner advised that his personal involvement, and those of his staff in respect of pay award discussions, had resulted in a high degree of assurance that 3.5% was likely. The recognition of financial pressures on residents had been a primary consideration in the decision to limit Council Tax increases in the last financial year. It was explained that the sustainability of the budget in the medium term however meant that a difficult decision had to be taken this year to ensure the Constabulary was properly funded.

A discussion took place regarding performance information in respect of productivity and impact of the additional officers within the budget. The Commissioner advised that this would be built into the accountability framework and could be reported to the Panel. The Commissioner and Chief Constable explained that this was taking time due to the lengthy process to recruit and train new officers.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be noted.

### **34 DRAFT PRECEPT PROPOSALS (CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL) 2022/23**

Members considered a report by the Director of Finance (Cumbria County Council) which accompanied the report from the Police and Crime Commissioner setting out the proposed budget and precept for 2022/2023 explaining the Panel's options for decision-making.

The Panel was asked to review the proposed precept and decide whether to, support the precept without qualification or comment, support the precept and make recommendations or veto the proposed precept.

Mr McSweeney suggested that the proposed precept should be agreed highlighting the success of Operation Uplift, the exceptional training undertaken by Cumbria Constabulary and felt that reserves should not be used due to the long-term effects this could have.

It was **MOVED** by Mr McSweeney and **SECONDED** by Mr Bingham that the precept of 3.67% be supported without qualification. Following a unanimous vote in favour of the motion, it was

**RESOLVED**, that the precept of 3.67% be supported without qualification.

### **35 UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS**

Members received a report from the Monitoring Officer (Cumbria County Council) which advised of any complaints received in accordance with the Panel's Complaints Procedure. The report outlined where appropriate, what, if any, action had been taken in respect of the complaints.

The Panel was informed the Counsel's advice detailed in the report had now been received since the date of the report. As the Group Lawyer had not had sufficient time to review the advice and prepare appropriate responses to the complainants, the Panel would be provided with further updates at the next meeting.

The Group Lawyer apologised to the Commissioner for the length of time it had taken to get to this point and that it was unfortunate that the two complaints were still being noted at the Panel meeting. It was agreed that the Group Lawyer would update the OPCC as soon as possible after the meeting, once the complainant had been informed.

The Panel was informed that since the date of the last report, one other matter was referred to the Group Lawyer. However, the referral was on an anonymous basis and appeared to relate to an out of county matter, the Commissioner's role in which was unclear. Members noted this was



not a matter that would likely be within the Panel's remit, therefore, advice had been sought and an update would be provided to the next meeting of the Panel.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **36 PANEL UPDATE REPORT**

The Panel considered a report by Strategic Policy and Scrutiny Manager (Cumbria County Council) which updated members on key issues and developments that had occurred since the last meeting on 14 October 2021.

Members were asked to identify issues to be included in the Work Programme for meetings during 2022/23.

**RESOLVED**, that the report be noted.

### **37 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on Tuesday 5 April 2022 at 10.30 am at Cumbria House, Botchergate, Carlisle.

The meeting ended at 12.10 pm