



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 6th March 2017

PRESENT : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Pearsall (Spokesperson), Lewis, Morgan, Wilson, Haigh, Dee, Hampson, H. Norman, Finnegan, Melvin, Smith, Hyman and Walford (Substitute for Hawthorne)

Others in Attendance

Councillor Jennie Watkins
Superintendent Richard Cooper
Councillor Isabel Brazil
Councillor David Brown
Councillor Said Hansdot
Councillor Colin Organ
Councillor Terry Pullen
Councillor Paul Toleman

Anne Brinkhoff
Gill Ragon, Head of Public Protection
Rhys Howell, Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Hilton and Hawthorne

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ryall declared a personal interest as her wife was a police officer.

Councillor Dee declared a personal interest as he was on the Police and Crime panel

Councillor Finnegan declared a personal interest as she was on the Police and Crime panel.

95. UPDATE ON DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES FROM COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP AND THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR LOCAL POLICING

The Chair welcomed Superintendent Richard Cooper, Head of local policing (Urban), Councillor Jennie Watkins, Head of the Community Safety Partnership, Gill

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Ragon, Head of Public Protection and Anne Brinkhoff, Corporate Director to share a verbal update on the deployment of resources and an update on the crime prevention strategy for Gloucester.

Superintendent Cooper provided an overview of the current deployment levels of police in Gloucester. He explained that 59 constables are specifically labelled as local police for Gloucester and this included 5 constables who were in training but not yet deployed. He said there were 27 PCSOs, whose duties were exclusively concerned with Gloucester and that 4 of these were working as part of the Community Builder team with leadership and oversight through Barnwood Trust. He explained there were 105 constables, with 10 vacancies being carried, whose role was to attend and resolve incidents in Gloucester and Cheltenham. He said there were 16 special constables in Gloucester and 29 attached to the urban incident resolution team and they had contributed 6500 hours on duty over the previous 6 months. He explained that the most recent change in deployment figures had been the transfer of 4 PCSOs from Cheltenham to Gloucester in October 2016. He stated that policing in Gloucester had become stronger over the previous 12 months but understood there were concerns regarding the visibility of policing in the City.

Councillor Watkins highlighted the joint responsibility for crime prevention and stated Safer Gloucester was working well through successful initiatives and events. She said this allowed a sharing of information. She said she was pleased that Members were using the Members Allocation Project to fund initiatives which promoted community safety.

Anne Brinkhoff presented a PowerPoint which outlined potential changes in how community safety would be maintained as there had been a County wide review commissioned by Leadership Gloucestershire; she said the review had focused on:

- How could there be effective and strategic governance?
- What scope was there to deliver a co-ordinated response whilst maintaining local variation where required?
- Recommendations of how community safety would be subject to oversight and scrutiny.
- Recommendations for potential opportunities for multi-agency commissioning.

The Chair stated that he would allow questions from Members of the Council, who did not usually sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but were in attendance on this occasion in the public gallery.

Councillor Hampson asked Superintendent Cooper if there were enough officers to police the City effectively. Superintendent Cooper stated there were enough officers available to respond to emergencies and reports of crime. He stated that current levels of staffing were at a sustainable level but he would aspire to a higher level of staffing if possible, as the nature of the work was such that it would always be beneficial to have more staff. He emphasised that the force was not at a point of crisis and did not see this as changing in the near future.

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Councillor Hyman said that he had brought the motion to the December council meeting following public concern about sufficient resources to effectively police the city and referred to an incident on Eastgate Street when officers had been outnumbered. He asked the following questions:

1. Will there be a time when the force is unable to cope due to lack of resources?
2. It appears that there are people who do not report hate crime, as they believe it will get no response, how is this being addressed?

Superintendent Cooper said that there was a need to balance the expectations of the public with the current demands placed upon the police force. He explained that in the previous 15 years the type of crimes being committed had changed. He said there had been a demonstrable reduction in conventional crime but a demonstrable increase in cyber-crime, which accounted for nearly a third of all crime the force dealt with. He explained that this had brought new challenges but also meant the methods used to combat such crime were less visible to the public. He said that it was necessary to prioritise how resources were used. Whilst many highly visible crimes had a relatively low level of harm, e.g. noise complaints, and could be dealt with through more visible policing, many invisible crimes had a relatively high level of harm, e.g. modern slavery and were not easily dealt with in a visible manner. He said that it was necessary to weigh up the public's desire to feel safer through more visible officers, with providing better safety for the public through less visible methods. With regards to a time when the force is unable to cope, he did not see that happening in the near future.

Superintendent Cooper said that a hate crime co-ordinator had been assigned in recent months and that the PCC had allocated money to community partners who would act as 3rd party reporting centres. He explained this was designed to promote a close working relationship with victim support and enable the police to receive details from community leaders. He said that the force was keen to increase the services provided for addressing hate crime and that the force was currently working with an academic from Leicester University to develop this. Councillor Watkins stated that the referred to incident in Eastgate street, had been a one off and since then the Nightsafe team had spoken to the nightclub's managers and changes had been made. She highlighted the quality of the CCTV cameras now installed in Gloucester and how these had been used in the incident under discussion.

Councillor Haigh spoke about community policing and how there had been a strong link in communities with the beat team but that that had been reduced over time. She followed this by saying there seemed to be an acceptance of low level criminality not being addressed and asked for comments on this. Superintendent Cooper said that these were 2 issues and he would address them as such. He said that the 1st issue was in relation to the public's personal knowledge of police officers and PCSOs and that this was challenging at the moment. He explained that the force was deploying officers where the need was greatest and this was mainly during evenings and around Barton and Tredworth. He understood this meant that members of the public who were not in that area or active during the night may not be aware of the work being done. He said the 2nd issue was a situation concerning

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priorities and how different people construct their feeling of safety. He explained that some felt safest knowing who would be responding and others felt safest having a quick response. He said in an ideal world, both would be possible. He said he was willing to commit publically to every ward having a named PCSO, although PCSOs may be responsible for more than one area. Councillor Haigh said that if PCSOs could attend local safety meetings, it would increase trust. Superintendent Cooper said that due to the number of PCSOs, he didn't see why this couldn't happen.

Councillor Ryall asked for comments from Superintendent Cooper on the HMIC report which had been recently published and drew attention to its areas of criticism. Superintendent Cooper stated he disagreed with much of the report and said that Gloucestershire Constabulary had been only one of four forces to reduce crime in the previous year and the only one other force increased customer satisfaction as Gloucestershire had done. He said there had been no attempt made by HMIC to look at how things had improved and they had also failed to take into account local factors. He said that HMIC had criticised Gloucestershire constabulary for lacking a strategy to address organised crime but he said that the force had disrupted a number of organised crime organisations in the past year but this was not taken into account when formulating the report. He said that HMIC seemed to be a compliance outlet and that it was tricky to see what was important to pay attention to and what was not. He agreed that certain areas of multi-agency work could be improved but that there were significant amounts of good practice recognised in the report. He said that the headlines of the report did not give the whole story. Councillor Ryall asked what reply from HMIC had been received based on Gloucestershire Constabulary's response. Superintendent Cooper said they had requested HMIC reconsider the headlines but this request had been declined.

Councillor Wilson asked if Hucclecote Police Station being staffed solely by PCSOs relied on the goodwill of PCSO to too great a level. Superintendent Cooper said he was pleased to hear it was performing well but the demands being placed upon PCSOs would need to be kept under review.

Councillor Finnegan commented on the day to day abuse police officers received and asked if the hate crime champions were acting on this. Superintendent Cooper said that this was not within the remit of the hate crime champions, as being a police officer was not a protected characteristic. He stated that abuse of officers is not acceptable but that police officers are expected to be more resilient than the general public. He said that there was a real drive for staff wellbeing with wellbeing programmes being run throughout the constabulary. He explained that all officers who got injured in the course of duty had a follow up with the Chief Constable. Councillor Finnegan reiterated the duty of care that was held towards police officers and congratulated the police on performing a valuable service.

Councillor Pullen said that it was hard to build a rapport with members of the force at all levels, as they regularly moved posts. He asked how this lack of continuity could be addressed. Superintendent Cooper said that they were trying to maintain PCSOs in the same areas over 2 year terms but due to staff changes, changes in operational needs and promotions for officers; it had not always been possible to keep staff in the same position and location for a long time.

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Councillor Morgan said that he had had good experiences with the PCSOs in Hucclecote and asked if there were plans to increase the number of PCSOs. Superintendent Cooper said that it was the aim to increase the number of PCSOs for the County to 300.

Councillor Ryall asked a trio of questions regarding the mounted police unit, which had increased from 2 to 3 horses. These were:

1. What was the rationale behind this unit?
2. How was the unit used?
3. Was the unit value for money?

Superintendent Cooper said that he could not answer the 1st question, as this was for the PCC to answer to the Police and Crime Panel, if they wished to enquire it of him. He said the unit was used as a taskable resource, which had been used in such cases as patrolling around Barton and tackling drug dealing in the park. He said they had provided benefit to the County and an evaluation of the 12 month trial was being completed. He was unsure how much it cost to run the unit.

Councillor Hampson said that he had recently attended a youth forum which was positive about the city but the young people had expressed concerns that the city was not safe, especially at night. He asked how these concerns could be alleviated. Councillor Watkins stated that the event had been a good event and that these were concerns she heard a lot. She said that the upgraded CCTV in Gloucester would help reduce these concerns, as it was not possible to have police on every corner. She also said it was the responsibility of Members to alleviate this through how they talk to people, what messages they put out and also by providing advice on how to protect oneself. Superintendent Cooper agreed that it was not about assigning more police but about changing the perception of danger. He said that Gloucester was a very safe place but that youngsters are most likely to be affected by crime. He said that a lot of work was being done with youth in the City and assisting them into becoming high achieving citizens. He said that what makes the public feel safe is more than just visible policing. He said aspects of society such as the state of the public realm and relationships with other members of society were vital in achieving this. He said that social media may create a disconnect between actual crime levels and perceived crime levels. He said that to help young people not feel afraid it was necessary for all parts of society to view youths as more than potential troublemakers. Councillor Watkins said that there was a need to keep engaging with young people and that the Police Cadets were a way of doing this.

Councillor Morgan said that CCTV footage screenshotted in the local press was of a low resolution. He asked if it was possible to partner with stores to improve their CCTV provision. Councillor Watkins stated that whilst store CCTV was low resolution, the street CCTV was of very high quality. She understood the issue that Councillor Morgan was raising but that with the high quality CCTV and the City Safe scheme it was possible to easily track any individual of concern through the city.

Councillor Hyman asked if there had been an increase in cyber-crime and if there was enough funding for this. Superintendent Cooper said there had been a successful application for funds for the transformation of cyber-crime reduction. He

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said there was currently enough funding and resources to manage this at the time but if the public began to report phishing attempts then resources would be stretched significantly. He said that 50% of crime is online fraud and the force was doing well addressing the current level. He said there was some concern regarding the knowledge and skill base of frontline officers as cyber-crime became the norm. He said that the force will continue to adjust as cyber-crime increases as a proportion of their caseload.

Councillor Dee said that the local press often reported on the same crime multiple times and that this contributed to a skewed understanding of crime levels. He asked if there was anything which could be done about this. Superintendent Cooper said that the force needed the press and vice versa and that the local press had been of great help at times but did sometimes present challenges.

The Chair asked what the local authority could do to assist the force to carry out their job. Superintendent Cooper outlined 5 ways by which Members could assist the constabulary, as stated below;

1. He invited feedback from Members in less formal circumstances.
2. He promoted building relationships with the police, including individual police officers.
3. He asked that concerns be addressed to Steve Wood, the Local Inspector, as although he realised the political impetus behind raising matters at a high level he explained that such matters were quickly sent back down the chain of command.
4. He asked they help shape public opinion and help the public realise that the areas where the police were needed most were the areas where the police were least visible.
5. He asked them to realise that the actions required may not always be popular.

The Chair stated that preventing crime and maintaining public safety was not just a case of police numbers but also involved upkeep of the public realm such as an absence of litter. He asked if there was anything Members should specifically say to the public about the current status of crime in Gloucester. Superintendent Cooper said there was nothing to state specifically at this time, but that the constabulary were focussing on Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and long term approaches to issues in order to address causes rather than combatting symptoms.

Councillor Lewis stated he that he was previously the Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Partnership and that there was a lack of community spirit at the time. He said this had been overcome through the police attending meetings and it had been painful at first but they had got the public onside eventually. He said he viewed the key reason for this success had been the public meeting the constabulary and through this building a relationship. He asked if the position of ranger could be reinstated. Councillor Watkins said she was unfamiliar with the ranger position but that developments were happening. She explained that community builders were working with PCSOs to build relationships in communities. She said that there was often a focus on the negative factors in an area and that part of community building

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was to focus on positives in the area and what the public wanted to see in the area rather than what they wanted to be absent. She said that there was a movement towards the police and Community Safety Partnership to be enablers rather than deliverers. She agreed that relationships were key but that there needed to be a shift in attitude. Councillor Haigh agreed that communities had capacity to self-deliver but said that if there was a move from delivering to an expectation of enabling without a proper discussion with the communities affected, it would have a deleterious effect. Councillor Watkins said that these conversations were happening and both local issues and local aspirations were being discussed. She said that not enough focus had been on aspirations in the past and there had been a surfeit of focus on reactive action. Councillor Haigh said that she felt her point had been misunderstood, she restated that there was a need for open communication and currently there was no clear indication of how things will change. Councillor Watkins said that there was a need to adapt and change provisions as the needs they were designed to address changed and that part of the discussion with the public and Members was to divine the correct path to take.

Councillor Walford asked if it would be possible to have a PCSO attend all Members' surgeries so the Member could direct any relevant issues to them. Superintendent Cooper said that he would not rule this out but that it was useful for the Members to act as a filter for which issues came to the police. He said that if PCSOs were present, it would unconsciously set up the expectation that the police could deal with matters, which weren't necessarily within their remit. Councillor Walford said that Members would welcome training in how to direct the public to the correct services rather than the police for appropriate matters. Councillor Watkins said that this was an area for possible development and that the "Hello Gloucester" van could be requested to visit areas, as and when issues become apparent. Superintendent Cooper said there were other community engagement vehicles which could be requested through Steve Wood.

Councillor Ryall asked about the sponsorship of police events and if there was a process to judge if the sponsorship was appropriate. Gill Ragon said that currently sponsorship was only being accepted from organisations they already knew. She said the current system relied upon common sense but could see the argument for formalising this. Anne Brinkhoff said that the common sense approach had been a successful method so far, and gave the credit for this to the quality of community safety officers working in this area. Due to this she said the process did not need to be formalised.

The Chair asked Anne Brinkhoff and Gill Ragon for further details regarding the approach they had outlined, which had a County level oversight for many issues. He was concerned that as urban crime was different than rural crime, that this approach would not be sufficient. Anne Brinkhoff said it was appropriate for some operations to be countywide and for others to be focussed on a smaller locality. She said it would take sensitivity and informed decision making to know what level was suitable for which issues. The Chair asked how scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership would be carried out if operating at a County level. Anne Brinkhoff said that would depend on how the partnership was operating as if being run by an outside body then scrutiny would be managed in a different manner.

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Councillor Haigh said that there was a blurring of the tiers of action, regarding who acted at what level. She said that most Members were unaware of the changes and that there needed to be more democratic input and engagement with Members. Anne Brinkhoff said they were developing more ways to engage with Members on the matter and were looking at a 2 tier level of operation, a tier at County level and another tier at City level.

Councillor Hyman asked about the future of the Hate Crime Incident Group in the new structure, as the current group includes The Forest of Dean. Councillor Watkins said that the future of this group was undecided but there was no desire to re-invent the wheel so any changes would rely on input of the involved groups. Councillor Hyman said there used to be more of these types of groups and the time may have come to re-evaluate this.

Councillor Haigh recommended that all Members should be consulted on any transfer of responsibility for Community Safety from a City level to a County level and before any new structures to this end are put in place. This motion was carried by the Committee.

The Chair thanked Superintendent Cooper, Councillor Watkins, Anne Brinkhoff and Gill Ragon for their presentations.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Cabinet all Members should be consulted on any transfer of responsibility for Community Safety from a City level to a County level and before any new structures to this end are put in place

96. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12 June 2017 6.30pm

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.30 pm hours

Chair