

27 February 2023		ITEM: 3
Extraordinary Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
Council Funded Police Officers Options Paper		
Wards and communities affected: Tilbury Town Centre and/or Purfleet as well as potential other wards in options	Key Decision: Possibly Key – Dependant on option selected	
Report of: Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michael Dineen, Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement & Community Safety		
Accountable Director: Julie Nelder, Acting Director of Public Realm		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report has been provided to the CGS O&S committee after its members supported the following recommendation on 8th September 2022.

‘Support the decision to carry out a review of the funded Town Centre Police Officers, as is good practise with all Council contracts’

The contract in place concerns the Council funding of 4 Essex Police Officers, currently deployed as part of the Town Centre Teams (TCT) within Community Policing in Tilbury and Purfleet.

Options for consideration are:

- I. The Contract is terminated complying with the contractual stipulations within the contract.
- II. The 4 additional officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.
- III. 2 funded officers remain in Tilbury with the 2 Purfleet Officers being able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.

- IV. 2 funded officers remain dedicated to Purfleet and Tilbury (1 in each area) and 2 officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ according to intelligence and operational demand.
- V. No change to current arrangements

The TCT, since their inception in 2019, have provided increased visible policing with their priorities being to tackle ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) in our busiest areas, protect the vulnerable, and tackle crimes against businesses. Following the initial success of this team and the benefit to our local community the Council committed funding to extend the Town Centre Police team in January 2020 to Tilbury and Purfleet, through the Council Funding of 4 additional officers to be deployed in these two areas.

The roles are dedicated to work within the key town centers to provide a proactive response to emerging crime trends and appropriate local issues as identified by the command team.

The key purpose is to promote public confidence and to take a dynamic and flexible approach to Community issues in our towns.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the options presented to them with regards to the future funding of the 4 funded Town Centre Police Officers, in line with good practice and make a recommendation to Cabinet for a decision on the options suggested.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council recognises that anti-social behaviour has always been a key priority for residents, and in January 2019, The Leader, within his annual Portfolio Holder Report announced that an additional revenue surplus funding of £750k be committed to provide additional police officers. Following the introduction of the Thurrock Town Centre Team in July 2019 in Grays, South Ockendon and Stanford Le Hope, it was agreed that the Council funded officers would be best placed complimenting the Town Centre policing team in the most vulnerable areas of the Borough at that time, Tilbury and Purfleet.
- 2.2 The Thurrock Council funded officers, of which there are 4, joined the existing Town Centre Team, in January 2020 with the posts funded by the Council until February 2024, within the £750k allocated budget. The cost of these additional officers is not within the Councils base budget and is an allocated fund.
- 2.3 The contract and funding expire in February 2024, as with any contract, it is always good practise to review, considering the landscape changes over time

within Essex Police and Thurrock Council, to ensure it is still meeting the needs of Thurrock residents and presenting good value for money. This is also timely with the current financial constraints that Thurrock Council is facing that all options for potential savings are at least considered.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The following options are outlined with associated benefits and risks for consideration by Members:

- I. The Contract is terminated complying with the contractual stipulations within the contract.
- II. The 4 additional officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.
- III. 2 funded officers remain in Tilbury with the 2 Purfleet Officers being able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.
- IV. 2 funded officers remain dedicated to Purfleet and Tilbury (1 in each area) and 2 officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ according to intelligence and operational demand.
- V. No change to current arrangements

3.2 Options with associated risks and benefits:

Option	Benefits	Risks	Mitigation
<p>The Contract is terminated complying with the contractual stipulations within the contract.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a financial saving made due to the ending of the funding. The timing of this termination would affect the sums involved • The funds that are saved would be able to be reinvested in Thurrock Council and would offset some shortfalls in other areas of the Council • Community Policing Team officers for Tilbury and Purfleet will retain ownership of their beats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential breach of legal contract • Protentional increased crime and ASB in Tilbury and Purfleet • Potential reduction in confidence in policing in Tilbury and Purfleet • Perception of reduction in visible policing • Risk to our most deprived communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No breach if 3 months' notice given • Police have been consulted on this review • CPT officers will continue to provide service to residents in these areas
<p>The 4 additional officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved morale of officers due to increased resource across high demand areas of Borough • Increased public reassurance in high footfall areas • Reduce crime & ASB in high footfall areas • Increased confidence in Police by retailers / businesses within Town Centre Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protentional increased crime and ASB in Tilbury and Purfleet • Reduction in confidence in policing in Tilbury and Purfleet • Risk to our most deprived communities • Residents not within TCT wards do not see the benefit • Restrictive to only TCT areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police have been consulted on this review • CPT officers will continue to provide service to residents in these areas • All residents visiting the high footfall areas will see the benefits

<p>2 funded officers remain in Tilbury with the 2 Purfleet Officers being able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ Corringham according to intelligence and operational demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tilbury, a priority area, remains with additional policing • Improved morale of officers due to increased resource across high demand areas of Borough • Increased public reassurance in high footfall areas • Reduce crime & ASB in high footfall areas • Increased confidence in Police by retailers / businesses within Town Centre Areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential increased crime and ASB in Purfleet • Potential reduction in confidence in policing in Purfleet • Risk to one of our most deprived communities, however crime data is low in Purfleet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in officers within the high footfall TCT areas • CPT officers will still patrol Purfleet
<p>2 funded officers remain dedicated to Purfleet and Tilbury (1 in each area) and 2 officers are able to be deployed to other areas covered by Town Centre Teams, namely Grays, Ockendon and Stanford le Hope/ according to intelligence and operational demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tilbury, a priority area, remains with Council funded police officers • Presence of additional Council funded Police Officer remains in Purfleet • Improved morale of officers due to increased resource across high demand areas of Borough • Increased public reassurance in high footfall areas • Reduce crime & ASB in high footfall areas • Increased confidence in Police by retailers / 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential increased crime and ASB in Purfleet and or Tilbury • Potential reduction in confidence in policing in Purfleet and Tilbury • Perception of reduction in visible policing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased officers mobile within the high footfall TCT areas • CPT officers will still patrol Purfleet and Tilbury alongside the 1 TCT officer for each

	businesses within Town Centre Areas		
No change to current arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No legal or reputational risk Relationship with Essex Police and Partnership remains strong • No adverse risk to crime and ASB in Tilbury and Purfleet • No change to confidence in policing in Tilbury and Purfleet • No risk to perception of reduction in visible policing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed opportunity to review value for money/Preferred use of resources • Current contract conditions are restrictive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not Applicable

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 These recommendations are made to the Portfolio Holder and the CGS S&O committee:

To ensure continued need, best practise, value for money and any cost savings to the Council are identified and discussed by members

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report provides opportunity for members of CGS O&S to be consulted on the varied options that officers, in conjunction with Essex Police, have considered reasonable for discussion and challenge by this committee.
- 5.2 The Chief Superintendent for West Local Policing Area has been consulted with on these options
- 5.3 The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner has been provided the opportunity to comment on these options
- 5.4 Members with lead for:

Communities (Cllr Abbas)
Environment and ASB (Cllr Maney)
Police and Crime Panel Representative (Cllr Collins)

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 This team of officers is central to delivering Thurrock Council's priority of:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

- 6.2 These additional officers support the following Community Safety Partnership Priorities for 22/23:

3. Violence and Vulnerability: tackling gang related activity and offensive weapons to reduce drug driven violence
6. Tackling Community Based Anti-Social Behaviour and Safeguarding Victims

- 8. Safer Streets through increased visibility and community engagement
- 9. Tackling offending

6.3 These additional officers support Essex Police's focus on:

- Victims
- Visibility
- Violence
- Vulnerability

6.4 They will deliver on the following priorities of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex:

- Reducing drug driven violence
- Preventing business crime, fraud, and cyber crime

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

Government Intervention & Section 114

In July 2022, the Council was made aware of concerns around the valuation of specific investments. A review process commenced, and the initial findings highlighted significant concern with three investments and the position was shared informally with the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

On the 2 September 2022 DLUHC announced directions to implement an intervention package at the Council.

The Secretary of State exercised his powers under section 15(11) of the Local Government Act 1999 to give a Direction without complying with the requirement at section 15(9) to give Thurrock an opportunity to make representations about the Directions, as he considered the failures of the Council's compliance with its Best Value duty in respect of the functions specified in the Directions sufficiently urgent. This was because of the following:

- the scale of the financial and commercial risks potentially facing the Authority, which were compounded by the Authority's approach to financial management and the seriousness of the allegations that were made by third parties about the processes applied to the operation of the Authority's commercial strategy, and;

- the failure of the Authority to provide assurance to Ministers and the Department on the adequacy of the actions that they were taking to address the issues, taking account of the scale and pace of the response required.

The Secretary of State nominated Essex County Council to the role of Commissioner

On 19 December 2022, the Council's Acting Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer issued a report under Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. This advises Councillors that the Council faces 'a financial situation of an extremely serious nature'.

Implications relating to this specific report

This work is funded through an earmarked reserve which was created in 2018/19 to cover a four-year period up to the value of £0.750m.

It should be noted that whilst the external audit review remains outstanding and consequently the 2021/22 position cannot be finalised, the availability of reserves remains unconfirmed at this stage

There is a commitment to fund this work until 26th February 2024 via a legal agreement. If the decision is made to cease the work prior to this date, Thurrock Council would make a one-off saving of approximately £0.017m for each month between the cessation date and 26th February 2024.

The other options involve operational changes but would not result in any financial saving.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**
Team Leader Contracts

The Legal agreement between The Chief Constable of Essex Police and The Chief Executive of Thurrock Council was signed on 8/1/20.

The Contract commenced on 27/1/20 for a period of 4 years to 26/2/24. The Legal Agreement is restricted to staff only.

Clause 3.2 of the agreement states:

Both parties agree to provide a minimum 3 month notice of termination of contract. Failure to comply will result in the funding partner being responsible for a full 3-month pro rata payment post notification of contract termination.

Clause 3.4 of the agreement states:

Pursuant to clause 3.2, either party may terminate this agreement at any time upon service of at least three months prior written notice.

Providing written notice is served to Essex Police that the contract will be terminated with a 3 month notice period the termination can take place as outlined.

Any proposed variation (as opposed to termination) to the current arrangements will need to be checked against the current agreement, and where necessary the Police Services' approval may be required.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Community Development Manager

The potential for loss of additional policing will have a negative impact on reducing inequalities within our deprived communities.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e., Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Impact on Looked After Children

This report will potentially impact on Essex Police HR and Legal teams, dependant on option agreed.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1: Community Equality Impact Assessment

Report Author

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