

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27 February 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Gary Byrne (Vice-Chair), Sara Muldowney and Maureen Pearce, Paul Arnold (Substitute for Elizabeth Rigby), Steve Liddiard (Substitute for Daniel Chukwu)

Apologies: Councillor Elizabeth Rigby

In attendance: Michael Dineen, Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

16. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

17. Council Funded Police Officers Options Paper

The Chair clarified that the report is no longer an exempt report and on pink paper and therefore will be debated in public.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety introduced the report. He explained that the report concerns the contract in place with regard to 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. The report outlines 5 options for the Committee to consider.

- 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 Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety highlighted that options 2,3 and 4 are the ideal options they are looking at so they can move officers around linked to intelligence and to meet operational demand.

Councillor Byrne queried why Stanford-Le-Hope and Corringham are being treated as the same place.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that those two areas are controlled by the same town centre team.

Councillor Byrne added that Stanford-Le-Hope has the third biggest shopping centre and expressed concern that those two towns were being treated differently to other towns.

Councillor Muldowney commented that she was confused as to why the options are different from the exempt report previously presented to the Committee.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that since the last meeting there has been ongoing dialogue with the police and the report has been updated.

Councillor Muldowney highlighted that she would have voted for the previous option 2 which is now not an option in the current report.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that this is the only option that has changed significantly from the previous report and this is because the police would like the flexibility to move officers around the town centre teams and that is what options 2, 3 and 4 deliver.

Councillor Muldowney reiterated that she would like to vote for the previous option 2.

Councillor Pearce noted that Aveley share officers with Ockendon and she queried if Aveley might get their own dedicated police officers in the future.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that he could not answer for the police as to where they will place their resources in the future.

Councillor Muldowney queried what the point of the meeting was.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that it was for the Committee to discuss and scrutinise the available options which is outlined in the recommendation at paragraph 1.1 so that he can make Cabinet aware of their comments.

The Chair commented that the location of Police officers should be put back into the hands of the police.

Councillor Byrne commented that if police were in every town in Thurrock there would be no crime. Prevention is better than cure.

The Chair commented that of course everyone would like to see more police on the beat.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that there are 7 officers already on the town centre teams and they will continue to police the town centres. However, the Council pays for an additional 4 police officers two of which have been dedicated to Purfleet and two that have been dedicated to Tilbury. Options 2, 3 and 4 would give the police the freedom to allow the police to decide whether some or all of those 4 officers can attend any town centre.

Councillor Muldowney referred to the Community Impact Assessment provided as an appendix and stated that it referred to a negative impact on redressing inequalities.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that within the options the police will respond to intelligence which can be in many forms such as crime statistics and crime hotspots and if there was a negative impact more officers will then be placed in that area as they will be able to free up the 4 Council funded police officers to target any spike in crime rates. The impact assessment would be correct if they were removing the police from those areas but that is not what the options are proposing. Purfleet has in fact had some low numbers before Christmas whereas Ockendon had 7 incidents, it would be nice to be able to move officers to the places that need it. However, it may be that they remain in Purfleet as that is where the intelligence informs the police that they are required.

Councillor Muldowney commented that in her ward there had been fires behind the shops but they have no town centre police so whatever decision is made her ward will not get anything.

Councillor P Arnold stated that the Police should be given the ability to deploy officers where they see necessary. Everyone wants to see police on the beat

where they are and just because you do not see them, it doesn't mean they are not there and acting as a deterrent.

Councillor Liddiard echoed Councillor Arnold's comment that the Police should have the flexibility to decide where officers are located. He also stated the Local Authority should not be funding police officers at all.

The Chair commented that they should perhaps put this back in the Police Commissioner's hands. They have done a good thing for the last 4 years by funding the additional police officers and she would like to see some data on the impact it has had.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety clarified that as a result of the S114 Notice the Local Authority are looking at savings in all areas and in funding 4 Police officers the Local Authority is currently helping to fund an organisation that has its own responsibilities. It has been put forward as a saving that the Local Authority no longer funds the additional 4 police officers and this was accepted at Cabinet last week and the final decision will be made at Full Council later this week.

Councillor Muldowney queried if option 2 gives the police the most flexibility. The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety agreed this was correct.

The Chair highlighted that the Committees views would go back to Cabinet.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety stated that if the Committee members could indicate which option they prefer that would be helpful. This will then be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Councillor Byrne queried how the Council can afford to support another service given the current financial situation. He stated that in the circumstances, he would have to go with option 1.

Councillor Liddiard commented that he would prefer option 3 or option 5.

The Chair, Councillor Pearce and Councillor Byrne preferred option 1.

Councillor Arnold preferred option 2.

Councillor Muldowney preferred option 4.

Councillor Byrne queried why Stanford-Le-Hope and Corringham were grouped together as the same place.

The Assistant Director for Investigation, Enforcement and Community Safety responded that the paper being discussed at the meeting doesn't define Borough lines and he will have to ask the police if they treat those areas as separate entities and respond to Councillor Byrne at a later date.

RESOLVED:

- 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.**

The meeting finished at 7.53 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**