



CHESHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2007 IN CONFERENCE ROOM 7, CONSTABULARY HEADQUARTERS, WINSFORD

Present: P Nurse (Chairman) R Giltrap
M D Darby (Vice-Chairman) R Hodson
P J Walker (Vice-Chairman) Ms E Lam
D Cargill B Maher
Mrs G A Cousins Mrs M A Ollerenshaw
Mrs M Chapman Mrs S Proctor
Mrs A Doran

Police Authority Officers:
M Sellwood, Chief Executive
Ms L Lunn, Treasurer
D Taylor, Deputy Clerk
M Eaton, Senior Administration Officer
Ms W Bebbington, Assistant Treasurer

Constabulary Officers:
P Fahy, Chief Constable
D Baines, Assistant Chief Constable
B Simmons, Assistant Chief Officer
Mrs K Watkins, Director of Performance
Development
A Rainford, Head of Finance & Procurement

Apologies: D T Bateman, Mrs A Coomer, J P Findlow and C Kirkpatrick

97. DEREK BATEMAN

The Chairman reported that Derek Bateman remained seriously ill in hospital and on behalf of the Authority, expressed his best wishes for a full and speedy recovery.

98. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2006 be confirmed as a correct record.

99. AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP

The Chief Executive reported on the new membership of the Authority following the recent selection process for Independent Members, together with the proposed selection process for the next round of Independent Member vacancies.

The Chairman welcomed the new Member, Mr Terry Savage, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the (re)appointment of Independent Members, for a four year term from the dates indicated below, be noted:-
 - Anne Doran (22 January 2007)
 - Robert Hodson (27 January 2007)
 - Emily Lam (22 January 2007)
 - Terence Savage (1 April 2007)
- (2) the extension of the appointments of the three existing Lay Justice Members to 31 March 2008, be noted; and
- (3) the proposals for the selection process for the appointment of Independent Members in 2008 be approved, and the Chief Executive be authorised to take all the necessary action.

100. POLICING STRATEGY 2007-10

The Chief Constable submitted the final draft of the Authority's Policing Strategy for 2007-10, for approval. It was reported that the Strategy had been developed in consultation with the Authority and the community, and had regard to local circumstances as well as national initiatives, and took account of the National Community Safety Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Policing Strategy 2007-10, be approved.

101. POLICING PLAN 2007/08

The Chief Constable and the Chief Executive submitted the final draft of the Policing Plan for 2007/08. The Plan gave particulars of the Ministerial Priorities for policing set by the Home Secretary, the local objectives set by the Authority; and incorporated the Efficiency Plan, together with the three local policing summaries for the Eastern, Northern and Western Areas.

The draft local objectives contained within the Plan had been the subject of consultation with core representatives on police forums and other partner agencies and the outcome of this process was reflected in the Plan. Policy & Finance Panel on 23 January 2007 (Minute 67) had considered the draft Plan and supported the proposed content, format and distribution. The Chief Constable reported that the theme for this year's Plan attempted to show the wide range of policing provided, from neighbourhood policing through to protective services.

RESOLVED:

That the 2007/08 Policing Plan, be approved.

102. POLICE REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX 2007/08

The Treasurer and the Chief Constable submitted a joint report setting out the draft budget and the implications on the Authority's council tax precept for 2007/08. The report outlined how the police service was financed and detailed the final revenue support grant settlement for 2007/08; the policy and expenditure proposals for the coming year; pay and price changes; police pension costs; reserves; and budgeted staffing levels.

The Treasurer presented the budget report for 2007/08 and highlighted the key issues which had been considered in arriving at the proposals being presented to Members, including the civilianisation of 50 police officer posts resulting in £480,000 savings; and the funding of Atlas and Omega projects from reserves which still left a £1.1 million deficit. It was reported that the budget had absorbed the £2.7 million investment in last year's budget, including the £1 million for protective services.

The Treasurer also reported on the Government's capping criteria which would not be formally set until all police authorities had settled their budgets. Based on previous years' criteria, it was possible that capping could be considered by the Government if the Authority exceeded a 5% increase in the precept and/or budget requirement. The levels of precept set by a number of other authorities, including neighbouring areas and Most Similar Forces, was also reported.

The Chairman opened the debate by proposing a precept increase of 6.95%, which was duly seconded. The Chairman stated that this would equate to a 14.5 pence increase per week for a Band D household, and still require a contribution of £442,000 from reserves to maintain the service in 2007/08 and enable some key improvements in service. The Chairman urged caution against any higher increases in the precept, which he felt would expose the Authority to an unacceptable risk of capping. At 6.95%, the Chairman was confident that as the third lowest police council tax in the country, coupled with the Constabulary's low cost base, efficiency and with crime falling by 6% and arrests up by 15%, that the decision could be legitimately defended to both Ministers and the public.

The Chairman commented that the budget would allow for continued investment in protective services; retaining the Witness & Victim Care Units which were essential to successful prosecutions; further improvements to call centre performance and in particular providing calls back to the public; making a continued contribution to child protection issues; and maintain 237 PCSOs from June, achieved by Government grant and partnership with Parish Councils, District Councils and Schools.

Members made several comments on the proposal, including some concern at the use of reserves to support the budget; the potential impact on the Authority if it were to be capped; the public opposition to any cuts in policing services; and the general support from the public to the continued investment in neighbourhood policing. It was also commented that the current system of council tax did impact adversely on people on low incomes, and that whilst a high increase in the council tax could not be supported, it was felt that the proposed increase, would be supported and could therefore be justified, if it meant that the current level of policing was protected.

The Chief Constable commented that this was not a high council tax proposal, and that residents of Cheshire would still be paying substantially less than its neighbouring forces and Most Similar Forces for policing. The Chief Executive reported that the development of a three year council tax strategy, which would look at how the Authority could move closer to the level of funding provided to other similar forces, would be presented to the Finance Panel on 12 June 2007.

An amendment was then proposed, and duly seconded, that the precept increase by 7.95% in order that all policing services could be maintained without a call on reserves. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

The original proposal to increase the precept by 6.95% was then put to the vote, and was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the comments made by the public at Police Forums and separately by the business consultees on the proposed budget, be noted;
- (2) the level of the Authority's total budget requirement for the financial year commencing 1 April 2007 be increased by 4.99% to £157,804,000 to be funded by a £442,000 contribution from general reserves, Government grant and a Council Tax increase of 6.95% (£7.54), bringing the Council Tax level for 2007/08 for a Band D equivalent property to £116.03;
- (3) the provision of £4,862,000 for pay and price increases between November 2005 and November 2006 and the provision of £2,412,000 for pay and price increases between November 2006 and March 2008 be approved;
- (4) a reduction of £388,000 be approved in respect of revenue expenditure commitments;
- (5) a provision of £1,299,000 be approved to meet new revenue expenditure proposals;

- (6) the capital payments programme totalling £14,736,000 for 2007/08 be approved, together with the method of financing and the associated revenue implications of £70,000, within which the following items be denoted “starred items”:-
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre £800,000
 - Operations Training Centre £6,000,000
 - United Police Security Architecture £150,000
- (7) the proposed Efficiency Plan as set out in Appendix 5 be approved and the budget reductions and efficiency cash savings target of £2,340,000 and the non cash efficiency savings target of £2,340,000 be noted;
- (8) the proposed budgeted staffing level of 2,156 police officers for 2007/08 be endorsed, following the civilianisation of 50 police posts.
- (9) savings of £484,000 be made by civilianising 50 police officer posts;
- (10) the total number of Police Community Support Officers be set at 237 and all surplus revenue funding for PCSOs becomes a contribution to the PCSO earmarked reserve;
- (11) any final 2006/07 net budget underspend (net of pensions), be carried forward by the Constabulary for use as a 2007/08 Force budget contingency providing it does not exceed £500,000;
- (12) the policies on the robustness and adequacy of reserves, and the use of general revenue reserves, be approved and due consideration must also be given to remedial action in the event of any in-year unbudgeted expenditure arising, which cannot be absorbed by the Constabulary nor funded from the Constabulary’s contingency, before any call on reserves is contemplated;
- (13) the prudential indicators for 2007/10 in Appendix 1 and the financial health targets for monitoring purposes in set out in paragraph 68 be approved;
- (14) the Service Improvement Panel be asked to consider and agree a programme of base budget reviews for 2007/08; and
- (15) precepts on collection funds be levied as follows:-

	£
Chester	5,326,514
Congleton	4,067,131
Crewe & Nantwich	4,705,738

Ellesmere Port & Neston	3,176,169
Halton	4,338,702
Macclesfield	7,789,757
Vale Royal	5,388,452
Warrington	7,768,519
Total Precept	<u>42,560,982</u>

103. COUNCIL TAX LEAFLET

The Chief Executive reported on the production of the council tax leaflet which as a precepting authority, the Authority was required to issue. It was reported that Policy & Finance Panel on 23 January 2007 (Minute 72) had considered and agreed the format and content of the draft leaflet.

RESOLVED:

That the Council Tax leaflet for 2007/08, be approved

104. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT

The Chief Constable presented his operational report which showed a 6.9% decrease in overall recorded crime, together with decreases across the other main crime areas, coupled with a 26% detection rate for the period November 2006 to January 2007. The Chief Constable reported on a number of issues including the positive work of the Neighbourhood Policing Units, particularly in Crewe, Ellesmere Port and Widnes; the outcome of the recent trial for the shooting of a doorman in Widnes; and the significant work that was being put into improving the citizen focus performance domain.

Members noted the report and welcomed the significant reductions in the level of crime. In addition, Members raised several other issues including the period of tenure for NPU inspectors; the policing of anti-social behaviour in rural areas; the positive impact of ArcAngel; and the pleasing reduction in the number of serious road traffic collisions, to which the Chief Constable responded. Members also queried the level of synergy between the Local Area Agreements and local performance target setting and the Director of Performance Development undertook to produce a report on this issue for the Performance Review Panel on 24 April 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the operational report of the Chief Constable, be noted.

105. POLICE AUTHORITY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The Chief Executive presented a report which set out the Authority's mission, vision and aims together with the revised governance structure, which had been previously discussed in detail at recent Members' Seminars. The revised structure had the full support of the Chief

Constable. The report also gave further details on the new scrutiny groups and the way in which they would operate.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) the mission, vision and aims of the Authority be approved;
- (3) the governance structure as set out in Appendix 1 of the Chief Executive's report, be approved and implemented with effect from 1 April 2007;
- (4) the Standing Orders relating to the Terms of Reference of the Authority Committees and Panels, as set out in Appendix 2 be approved;
- (5) the operation of Scrutiny Groups as set out in the report, be approved; and
- (6) the Engagement Committee meet on the dates identified for the Statutory Purposes Committee in the 2007/08 programme of meeting.

106. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2006/07 & 2007/08

The Treasurer presented a report which sought endorsement for the Authority's treasury management strategy and the Annual Investment Strategy for the year 2007/08, together with an update on treasury management activity undertaken to date.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy for 2007/08, be approved;
- (2) the 2007/08 Annual Investment Strategy, as set out in Appendix 1, be adopted and a limit of £15m in total be approved for non-specified investments; and
- (3) the treasury management activities undertaken in 2006/07 to date, be noted.

107. CHESHIRE, WARRINGTON & HALTON INFORMATION CONSORTIUM

The Director of Performance Development provided an update in relation to the achievements and development of the Cheshire, Warrington & Halton Information Consortium, including details of recent initiatives on information sharing and the one stop community access roadshows.

Members noted the report and expressed some concern at the limited progress in the Consortium's work.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the work of the Cheshire, Warrington & Halton Information Consortium, be noted.

108. MEMBERS ACTIVITY

The Chief Executive presented a report on the attendance by Members at recent meetings of Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships and other bodies to which they had been appointed by the Authority. The Chairman also reported on the meeting he attended with other Chairmen and Chief Executives in the North West to discuss collaboration issues.

RESOLVED:

That the report on Members activity, be noted.

109. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES, PANELS, FORUMS AND OTHER MEETINGS

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Minutes of the following meetings be received:-
 - Best Value & Audit Committee: 16 January 2007
 - Statutory Purposes Committee: 13 February 2007
 - Performance Review Panel: 19 December 2006
 - Organisation & Service Development Panel: 2 January 2007
- (2) the Minutes of the Policy & Finance Panel on 23 January 2007 be received and the recommendations from the specific Minutes listed below, be adopted:-
 - Minute 63 - Capital Expenditure & Financing: Three Quarter Year Review 2006/07
 - Minute 65 - Performance Targets 2007/08
 - Minute 71 - Revenue Budget, Capital Programme & Council Tax 2007/08
- (3) the summary of business considered at the last cycle of Forum meetings, be noted; and
- (4) the notes of the meeting with Chambers of Commerce on 7 February 2007, be noted.

110. URGENT BUSINESS: CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY – 150TH ANIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

In accordance with Standing Order 5.3, the Chairman was of the opinion that this matter be considered as a matter of urgency as it was necessary to authorise funding to allow the arrangements to progress.

The Chief Executive presented a report on the celebrations proposed by the Constabulary to celebrate its 150th anniversary, which included a service of celebration at Chester Cathedral and a garden party at the Constabulary Headquarters. Detailed planning was currently under way and a further report would be considered by the Authority on 3 April 2007.

Members noted the report and supported the proposals. It was queried whether the Cathedral service would be multi faith and the Chief Constable confirmed it would.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of Cheshire Constabulary be supported; and
- (2) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, be authorised to approve any necessary funding for the celebrations from reserves, prior to the report to the Authority on 3 April 2007.

111. URGENT BUSINESS: APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER

RESOLVED:

That an item of urgent business relating to the appointment of Treasurer be considered in Part 2 of the agenda.

112. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as applied by the Police Act 1996, and as amended, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act in the paragraphs indicated:-

<i>Item</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Chief Constable's Report	(7) Prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

Regional Counter Terrorism Unit	(7)	Prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime
Collaboration: Progress Report	(7)	Prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime
Cheshire Casualty Reduction Partnership	(3)	Financial or business affairs
Write Off of Uncollected Debt	(3)	Financial or business affairs
City Regions	(4)	Labour relations
Urgent Business: Appointment of Treasurer	(4)	Labour relations

113. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

In accordance with Standing Order No. 7.12(b), the Chairman proposed that the meeting be adjourned.

RESOLVED:

That the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting adjourned at 12.30pm and reconvened at 12.50pm.

114. CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT

The Chief Constable presented the second part of his operational report, which included updates on a number of incidents and new and ongoing investigations which the Constabulary were undertaking.

RESOLVED:

That the Chief Constable's report be noted.

115. REGIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM UNIT

The Assistant Chief Constable reported on the proposed creation of a Regional Counter Terrorism Unit within the North West including the benefits such a Unit would bring to Cheshire and also potential implications, particularly in relation to staffing. The Authority was also circulated with the executive summary of the HMIC inspection of counter terrorism and domestic extremism.

Members noted the report and raised concerns about possible governance and command and control issues which still required further consideration before the units became operational.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the creation of a regional Counter Terrorism Unit, be noted;
- (2) a further update be provided to the Service Improvement Panel on 8 May 2007; and
- (3) the HMIC inspection report on counter terrorism and domestic extremism, be noted.

116. COLLABORATION: PROGRESS REPORT

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report on recent collaboration activities that had been undertaken in the North West region and with North Wales. The report provided details of the areas that were being explored for further collaborative working, together with the progress made in a number of business and support areas.

The Chief Executive reported that the Policing Minister had recently written to all police authorities and chief constables setting out the timescales for achieving a protective services standard and that this would form the basis of a more detailed report to the Authority on 3 April 2007.

Members noted the report and welcomed the positive moves being made to develop collaborative working across forces in the region, and expressed their hopes to see positive outcomes to the various negotiations with forces in the near future.

RESOLVED:

That the latest collaborative activities being undertaken by the Constabulary, be noted.

117. CHESHIRE CASUALTY REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report seeking the Authority's approval to enter into the draft Partnership agreement made between members of the Cheshire Casualty Reduction Partnership.

Members noted the report but expressed concern at the apparent lack of Member involvement in the governance process across the partnership and requested that representations be made to other partners to seek their support for more appropriate public governance structure.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) support in principle be given to the creation of the Cheshire Casualty Reduction Partnership;

- (2) the Partnership Agreement (subject to final legal consultations), be agreed;
- (3) it be noted that the partnership should be cost neutral to the Authority; and
- (4) representations be made to other partners to seek their support for greater public accountability in the governance structures.

118. WRITE OFF OF UNCOLLECTED DEBT

D Cargill, Mrs S Proctor and P J Walker declared a personal interest in this report but remained in the meeting.

The Head of Finance & Procurement presented a report which sought approval to write off approximately £146,000 in uncollected debt which was considered to be unrecoverable. The debts had accrued during the period 2001-2006.

Members noted the report and expressed concern at some of the debts which had been incurred and which were now unrecoverable, and asked for assurances that the new process put in place to recover such debts was being effectively enforced. The Treasurer undertook to request Internal Audit to review the process to ensure its effectiveness.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the write off of unrecoverable debt, as set out in the Chief Constable's report, be approved; and
- (2) Internal Audit be requested to review the revised debt monitoring and recovery procedures.

119. CITY REGIONS

The Chief Executive gave a verbal update on the city region proposals and their possible impact on the Authority area, together with an update on the proposals for unitary government in Cheshire.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

120. URGENT BUSINESS: APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER

In accordance with Standing Order 5.3, the Chairman was of the opinion that this matter be considered as a matter of urgency as it was necessary to agree the process for the appointment of the Treasurer without delay.

The Chief Executive reported on the proposals for the appointment of a Treasurer following notification from Cheshire County Council that they would not be in a position to provide the service when the current contract ended in October 2007.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the decision of Cheshire County Council in relation to the future provision of treasury services, be noted;
- (3) the Chief Executive be authorised to take all necessary action to progress the selection and appointment of a Treasurer to the Police Authority with effect from 1 November 2007; and
- (4) the Terms of Reference of the Selection Committee be amended to include the appointment of a Treasurer.

Duration of Meeting: The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 1.45pm