

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-054-2021-22

Date of meeting: 11 April 2022



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Housing Services – Cllr. H Whitbread

Subject: Renewal of Council funding for the employment of a dedicated policing team within Epping Forest District.

Responsible Officer: Caroline Wiggins – Directorate Specialist

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Cabinet agree to renew the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) of the Council funded dedicated policing team within Epping Forest District.

Executive Summary:

An annual budget of £180,000 has been agreed for 3 years, to fund the provision of the employment of three full-time Police Officers by Essex Police, that comprises a sergeant and two police constables from June 2022 to June 2025, to be jointly tasked and directed by the Council and Essex Police.

This will provide a dedicated Police resource for the district across the District's communities with full powers of arrest and enforcement and will support Council officers in specific work as identified in the main body of this report.

1. Background:

1.1. Following extensive research and consultation it was agreed that the council would fund one Sergeant and two Police Constable's for a three year period from July 2018. In 2021 it was agreed to extend the contract for a further year until June 2022. This was as a supplement to Essex Police's existing district Community Policing Team.

1.2. A Service Level Agreement was implemented which dedicates the team to the council and that abstraction of officers would only happen in extreme cases and for very high priority incidents in Essex.

1.3. The team became operational in July 2018 and are tasked according to the District Community Safety Partnership priorities which are identified through the Annual Strategic Assessment. These are aligned to the priorities set by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Policing Plan and Essex Crime Prevention Strategy. Aside from these priorities the team are also deployable to support EFDC

staff in carrying out their work where there is an identified threat, harm, or risk to staff.

1.4. When not deployed on tasks the team are assigned patrols in areas identified as linked to high crime or high-risk/harm ASB. The skillset of the officers matched with their knowledge of local crime patterns and criminal behaviour have resulted in significant arrests, vehicle recoveries and general disruption to criminal activity. As well as nurturing strong relationships with ANPR and intelligence teams within Essex Police, the team have established strong bonds with teams from the Metropolitan Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary and regularly share intelligence and work collaboratively. Appendix 1 includes information on taskings since the implementation of the team in 2018.

1.5. As well as their daily to day operations the team have also provided added benefits such as being the local lead for four election processes and were heavily involved in two significant policing operations in the district:

- Operation Rose that took out a number of gang members selling drugs in the district and Operation Hemlock targeted an organized criminal group involved in high value vehicle thefts.
- The team also took the lead for planning and executing the policing plans around Halloween 2019 which the District Commander commended as being 'the best planned Halloween operation in recent years.
- The team led on partnership work alongside multiple internal teams to enforce COVID-19 legislation. This included visits to business premises in support of Council officers, intelligence sharing around 'party houses' and ad hoc targeting of habitual criminals in breach of the legislation.

1.6. Close management of the tasking process has ensured that our police team are deployed efficiently and effectively.

1.7. A review of performance data from December 2018 and December 2021 Partnership, shows that crime in general has reduced across the district since June 2018 as can be seen in appendix 2. The Essex Police year to date figures are included in Appendix 3.

1.8. In early Spring 2022 a further Police Officer funded by Essex Police will be joining the funded officers, this will increase the establishment to a Sgt and four police constables at no cost to the Council.

2. Preferred Option

2.1. EFDC to renew the SLA for an additional 3 years

This will provide a dedicated Police resource for the district across the District's communities with full powers of arrest and enforcement. The officers would also be available to support Council officers in specific work as identified in the main body of this report, where arrest may be necessary.

Cost for 3 x FTE Police Officers per annum £180,000

Total cost for 3 years period £540,000

The benefit of this option is that Essex Police will supply the resource of an additional Police Officer to the team at no cost to the Council, increasing the number of dedicated officers from three to four.

2.2. Options Considered and Rejected:

EFDC to terminate the contract at the end of the 4 year period in June 2022.

Reasons for decision:

The impact of not renewing the SLA would be that EFDC will lose the 'added value' provided by the team and would rely on the District Community Policing Team that have competing demands placed upon them and will lose the ability to directly task the dedicated team.

Implications

Legal and Governance Implications:

Essex Police receives a precept to provide Community Policing within the Epping Forest District and is responsible for the governance of local policing.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None, the SLA contributes to making the district a safer place for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Consultation Undertaken:

The Finance Team have been consulted and budget provision was agreed at Cabinet on 7th February 2022 until June 2025.

Risk Management:

The Serious Violence Duty Bill is now awaiting its third reading in the House of Lords. The Bill introduces a duty requiring Local Authorities to work in partnership to identify serious violence within their area and develop a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.

Equality Analysis: The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided at Appendix 3 to this report.

Background Papers: None