

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-058-2010/11  
**Date of meeting:** 31 January 2011



**Portfolio:** Safer and Greener  
**Subject:** Jointly Funded Police Community Support Officer Posts  
**Responsible Officer:** John Gilbert (01992 564062).  
**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) To give consideration to the following options for 2011/12:
  - (a) to maintain the joint funding of six Police Community Support Officers and to fund the shortfall of £2,530 from within the existing Community Safety budgets;
  - (b) to reduce the number of jointly funded Police Community Support Officers from six to five to enable expenditure to be maintained within the currently available budget, realising a saving of £13,160;
  - (c) to reduce the number of jointly funded from the current six to a number between one and four realising savings of £15,688 for each PCSO withdrawn; or
  - (d) to cease the joint funding of all Police Community Support Officers realising a saving of £91,600; and
- (2) To give guidance on the approach to be taken for the joint funding of Police Community Support Officers for 2012/13 and thereafter.

### **Executive Summary:**

The Council has been jointly funding six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) since 2005. This enables the provision of six additional PCSOs over and above those directly funded for the district by Essex Police, with the Council meeting half of the costs. This means there are more PCSOs available and additionally, as part of the agreement, officers within the Council's Safer Communities Team are able to task all PCSOs, not just those which are jointly funded. In view of financial constraints affecting the Council and Essex Police, the funding of PCSOs needs to be reviewed to ensure that the Council is obtaining value for its annual revenue investment.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

For Cabinet to consider, for the forthcoming 2011/12 financial year and the financial years which follow, whether it wishes to:

- (a) reduce the funding to meet available budget; or

(b) withdraw all funding.

**Other Options for Action:**

There are no options other than those set out in the report.

**Report:**

1. The Council has been part funding six PCSOs since August 2005. The costs of this arrangement plus the functional arrangements are contained within a “Special Services Agreement” which operates for a three year term. The last agreement was signed by the Chief Executive in April 2010.

2. The agreement set out that the Essex Police would maintain a core service level of 26 PCSOs within the District and that the six jointly funded posts would be in addition to that core, making 32 in all. Furthermore, subject to Police operational requirements, officers from the Council’s Safer Communities Team are able to exercise tasking rights, whereby, in agreement with the local Commander, PCSOs can be required to undertake particular duties in support of Council and Community Safety Partnership objectives.

3. Recent correspondence with the Police indicates that they have a current establishment of 26 PCSOs which includes the six jointly funded by this Council. Whilst this does not accord with the Special Services Agreement, Essex Police state that this is the correct establishment for the district.

4. It is clear from public consultation that the residents of the District see the management of crime and disorder as very important, and in particular dealing with anti-social behaviour. Although the actual level of crime remains low, concern about crime remains high. PCSOs form a key component of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, even though their powers, as uniformed civilians, are limited. The Home Office Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, in a letter to the Chairs of Community Safety Partnerships in October 2010, emphasised the importance of partnership working in the future, especially as budgets become tighter and the need for efficiencies increase.

5. In terms of community policing, details available from the Essex Police website for community policing teams in this District shows the following:

<b>Community area</b>	<b>Police Officers</b>	<b>PCSOs</b>
Buckhurst Hill	2	1
Chigwell	2	3
Debden	2	3
Epping south east	2	1
Epping Town	3	2
Epping west	4	1
Loughton	3	3
Ongar	3	4
Waltham Abbey	5	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>

It should be noted that the police officer numbers include some multiple references to the District Commander and taking that into account shows a even split between police officers and PCSOs.

6. There are a number of key areas where PCSOs can be shown as making a significant contribution to reducing crime and improving public confidence. The following are a few examples:

(a) by agreement with Essex Police the Council is about to confer delegated powers of responsibility on all Epping Forest based PCSOs to issue council fixed penalty notices in relation to environmental offences. PCSOs are set to carry out joint patrols with EFDC Environment & Neighbourhoods Officers and provide mutual support to each other;

(b) PCSOs monitor all Safer Communities Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABC). The ABC is a contract that lasts 6 months and is crucial for intervention and breaking a cycle of potential offending. PCSOs report back to the Council's Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) investigators and a file of evidence is built up regarding compliance or non-compliance. That evidence is available for use in any future enforcement action. Nearly all ABCs accepted and undertaken in EFDC have proven to be successful;

(c) PCSOs also provide the same service for monitoring Good Neighbour Contracts which are targeted at Council Housing tenants in conjunction with Council ASB Investigators. This provides an excellent opportunity to engage with and moderate the anti-social behaviour of tenants;

(d) a process has been agreed with Youth Offending Team that ABCs will be offered to some individuals who obtain Final Warnings for anti-social related offences, such as causing criminal damage, public order offences or shoplifting etc. Final Warning clinics do not have the ability to monitor individuals once they have ended. An ABC will allow 6 months of monitoring of youths identified as having the potential to turn to criminality without further support and encouragement. The PCSOs will monitor these and report back to Council ASB Investigators who will manage the intervention. This is an excellent way of providing effort at an early stage to prevent longer term offending;

(e) Youth engagement is a priority for Safer Communities with key initiatives of Crucial Crew and the Reality Roadshow. The support of PCSOs is essential for the success of these events. It is unlikely that police would be able to supply resources in support of them without the jointly funded officers. This would have resource implications for the Council if the events are to continue;

(f) Safer Communities regularly carry out public engagement raising awareness around our key priority areas. These include recent market stalls on a Monday at Epping raising awareness of dwelling burglary and providing crime prevention material and advice. This was carried out by PCSOs, who were also responsible for instigating an arrest. The public consultation events late last year were subject of leaflet drops all delivered by PCSOs. PCSOs carry out 'door knocking' on behalf of the Council to raise awareness, publicise events or identify witnesses/victims; and

(g) Between 2007 and 2010 PCSOs carried out 245 tasking requests, generating 52 intelligence reports, 204 stop & accounts, attended 106 incidents whilst completing the tasking, assisted in 18 arrests and spent 1760 hours attached to taskings and community meetings.

7. Regular police officers would not be able to devote the time to support these type of initiatives and activities. In consequence, our ability to deliver services that the public want would diminish significantly at a time when there is to be greater emphasis placed on dealing with the concerns of communities.

8. The financial implications are set out in detail below. The Council cannot afford to part fund six PCSOs without additional budget provision/virement. The choices available are therefore as follows:

(a) to maintain the six part funded posts and to meet the funding shortfall of £2,530 from existing Community Safety budgets;

(b) to reduce the number of PCSOs supported from 6 to 5 to stay within the allocated budget;

(c) to reduce numbers further to a number between 1 and 5 with a revenue saving of £15,688 (at pre-September 2011 costings) for each PCSO removed; or

(c) cease all funding for PCSOs thereby saving the entire budget allocation of £91,600 over a full budget year.

9. Of the fourteen unitary/district councils in Essex only five currently jointly fund PCSOs. Their position is as follows:

- Brentwood: are proposing to continue the joint funding of four officers;
- Castle Point: report proposing to cease the joint funding of four officers;
- Maldon: report proposing to cease the joint funding of four officers;
- Thurrock: report proposing to cease the joint funding of fifteen officers;
- Uttlesford: report proposing to continue the joint funding of four officers;
- Epping Forest: currently joint fund six officers.

#### **Resource Implications:**

Although the agreement with Essex Police for the six additional PCSOs operates from April to March, it is subject to review every September. A letter has been recently received from the Police setting out the costs for PCSOs and seeking the Council's response as to whether it proposes to continue with its joint funding. That information was required by 22 December 2010 but the Police have been informed that an answer in that timeframe was not possible and that the decision would be one for Cabinet/Council. The cost of a shared PCSO post has now risen, from September 2011, to £16,119 per officer, resulting in a total expenditure by this Council of £96,714 per annum. The budget allocation for 2011/12 is £91,600 (the same as 2010/11) meaning that there is insufficient resource for six PCSOs for the full 12 months of 2011/12.

As part of the government funding settlement for the Police Service, government provided continued funding for Neighbourhood Policing, of which 90% was ring fenced for the provision of PCSOs for the next two years. Government stated that this would meet around 75% of the salary costs of PCSOs and the remainder should be met through match funding by other authorities and local businesses. This level of funding is to remain in place until the introduction of Police & Crime Commissioners in 2012, who will then assume control of all budgets.

There does appear to be confusion on the part of the Police around the core levels of PCSOs. The Service Agreement clearly states thirty two overall (including the six joint funded), but their admin/finance officers are of the opinion that the correct number is 26, including those jointly funded. To some degree this is immaterial insofar that if this Council doesn't fund a jointly funded post, it will be withdrawn by the Police.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The agreement with Essex Police was signed by the Chief Executive and the Chief Superintendent in April 2010. It runs for three years with reviews each September. For funding to be withdrawn or for the agreement to be terminated requires 4 months notice by either party. Irrespective of the timing of the notice, the wording of the agreement means that changes can only be implemented upon its anniversary i.e. April of a particular year. However, it is likely that the Police will recognise the current funding pressures and will not wish to invoke the conditions of the agreement in any particular case. Discussions with the Police on this particular matter will be reported at the meeting.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The Police Service and the Community Safety Partnership both consider PCSOs to be a key component of effective community policing. They provide a visible uniformed presence on our streets and although their direct powers are limited they are able to provide very effective community engagement. A reduction in the overall presence of PCSOs could reduce public confidence.

Our agreement with the Police enables certain Council officers to task all PCSOs (not just those jointly funded) to undertake specific roles to meet the objectives of the Council and/or the Community Safety Partnership. This can be a very useful additional resource which would not otherwise be available to the Council in undertaking its own enforcement duties. The Council has also authorised PCSOs to serve a number of formal notices for breaches of environmental legislation.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Chairman of Community Safety Partnership (Comments awaited).  
Superintendent Adrian Coombs – West Essex Liaison/Partnership Officer (Comments awaited).

### **Background Papers:**

Correspondence from:

- Parliamentary Under Secretary of State;
- Essex Police Authority; and
- Essex Police Public Relations.

### **Impact Assessments:**

#### Risk Management

A decision to withdraw all or part of the joint funding will result in the Police withdrawing its matched funding and the direct loss of PCSO posts within the District. Dependant upon the scale of the withdrawal, there may also be the loss of direct tasking of PCSOs within the district. Other adverse effects are set out under “Safer, Cleaner, Greener” implications above.

#### Equality and Diversity:

*Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?*

No

*Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?* No

*What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?*  
N/A.

*How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?*  
N/A.