

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-042-2009/10
Date of meeting: 5 December 2011



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Safer, Greener & Highways
Subject: Funding of Police Community Support Officers
Responsible Officer: John Gilbert (01992 564062)
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note that under the Blueprint for future Policing of the District all Police Community Support Officers will be funded by Essex Police using their Government funding allocation; and**
- (2) In the light of recommendation (1) that the Council cease its joint funding of Police Community Support Officers with effect from the commencement of the 2012/13 financial year generating a continuing service budget saving of £62,750**

Executive Summary:

The Council has been jointly funding, with Essex Police, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for a number of years. The initial number of PCSOs was six, but this was reduced to four as part of the 2011/12 budget setting process. The current review of policing in Essex, the "Essex Blueprint" will result in significant changes in the way community policing is delivered. Essex Police receive government funding for a core number of PCSOs in Essex and it has been indicated that Essex Police will be unable to support the funding of PCSOs beyond this core number. Therefore, if Essex Police are unable to fund those additional posts, and this Council does not want to fund PCSOs in their entirety, it seems appropriate for the Council to make the decision to cease its joint funding, with that coming to an end at the end of this current financial year. This will result in a continuing services budget saving of £62,750 for 2012/13.

The agreement with Essex Police requires that we give four months notice, which could not be met given the date of this Cabinet meeting, the requirements for call in and the forthcoming Christmas holiday period. However, the Police have notified us that they understand this timing difficulty and are content to waive that requirement.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To cease the funding of PCSOs based on the operational decisions made by Essex Police as part of their "Essex Blueprint".

Other Options for Action:

The only alternative option is to fund PCSOs in their entirety, which would reduce the current numbers from four to two or to increase funding to enable the funding of all four existing

jointly funded posts.

Report:

1. The Council has been jointly funding, with Essex Police, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) for a number of years. The initial number of PCSOs was six, but this was reduced to four as part of the 2011/12 budget setting process. The current review of policing in Essex, the “Essex Blueprint” will result in significant changes in the way community policing is delivered. Essex Police receive government funding for a core number of PCSOs in Essex and it has been indicated that Essex Police will be unable to support the funding of PCSOs beyond this core number.

2. Therefore, if Essex Police are unable to fund those additional posts, and this Council does not want to fund PCSOs in their entirety, it seems appropriate for the Council to make the decision to cease its joint funding, with that coming to an end at the end of this current financial year. This will result in a continuing services budget saving of £62,750 for 2012/13.

3. Discussions with police colleagues in respect of the police restructuring (“Essex Blueprint”) has resulted in it becoming clear that whilst overall community policing activity will be increased, the numbers of PCSOs will decline, resulting in all PCSOs being entirely funded from the police’s core Home Office funding. Given that it would be inappropriate for this Council to fund PCSOs in their entirety, this enables the Council to agree with the police that all joint funding will cease with effect from the start of the 2012/13 financial year. If agreed this results in a continuing service budget saving of £62,750.

4. The agreement with Essex Police requires that we give four months notice of any intention to withdraw funding, which could not be met given the date of this Cabinet meeting, the requirements for call in and the forthcoming Christmas holiday period. However, the Police have notified us that they understand this timing difficulty and are content to waive that requirement, enabling the funding to cease as recommended.

5. The reduction in tasking rights and reductions in PCSO numbers may be seen as a retrograde step. However, officers are satisfied that the current excellent working relationship between the police and the Council (via the Safer Communities Unit) will continue and indeed will become ever more important as resources become further stretched in the future.

Resource Implications:

2011/12 continuing services budget allocation is £62,750. This jointly funds four PCSOs. This will be saved in its entirety from April 2012. There are no additional resourcing consequences for the Council.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The agreement with Essex Police requires that we give four months notice of any intention to withdraw funding, which could not be met for the end of the financial year given the date of this Cabinet meeting, the requirements for call in and the forthcoming Christmas holiday period. However, the Police have notified us that they understand this timing difficulty and are content to waive that requirement, enabling the funding to cease as recommended.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

As set out in the main body of the report.

Consultation Undertaken:

Essex Police.

Background Papers:

“Essex Blueprint” (Essex Police).

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Provided that the “Essex Blueprint” is implemented as described and the close working relationship between the Police and the Council continues under the blueprint, there should be no degradation in community policing arising from these proposals.

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.