

Unconfirmed



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the **Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, Riduna Park, Melton** on **Thursday 17 May 2018**

Members of the Committee present:

P Dunnett (Chairman), S Bird, S Burroughes, P Coleman, G Harding, C Hedgley, G Lynch, S Mower

Other Councillor present:

S Gallant

Officer present:

K Abbott (Democratic Services Business Manager)

Others present:

R Kearton, Assistant Chief Constable, Suffolk Constabulary

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Deacon and Councillor Block.

2. Declarations of Interest

With regard to item 4, Councillor Hedgley declared a Local Non Pecuniary Interest as the Council's representative on the Suffolk Police and Crime Panel.

With regard to item 5, Councillor Dunnett declared a Local Non pecuniary Interest as a member of the Suffolk Superfast Broadband CIC.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Update and Overview of Strategic Policing Matters

The Chairman welcomed Ms Rachel Kearton, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC), Suffolk Constabulary, to the meeting and invited the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Community Health to introduce the item.

The Cabinet Member introduced ACC Kearton who was attending the meeting in place of Deputy Chief Constable Jupp. The Cabinet Member invited ACC Kearton to address the Committee and said that, in particular, it would be pleased to hear how the changes to the

Local Policing Model were progressing, as well as the impact of those changes, both to date and anticipated in the future.

ACC Kearton gave a detailed presentation to the Scrutiny Committee. This outlined how Suffolk Constabulary continued to identify and make changes to its structure, how it worked in response to changing demands, challenges and its financial situation to ensure it continued to provide an effective service. The presentation outlined that the Constabulary's aim was to provide a service which:

- Engaged effectively with communities
- Protected the most vulnerable
- Worked with partners
- Continuously adapted to meet current and emerging challenges
- Evolved and modernised
- Remained financially stable and secure

ACC Kearton stated that the Constabulary was primarily changing because demand had increased and, in particular, she outlined the increases in a number of key areas:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| ▪ Serious sexual offences | ↑ 26% |
| ▪ Domestic Abuse crimes | ↑42% |
| ▪ Emergency calls | ↑23% |
| ▪ Number of incidents recorded | ↑5% |

In response to a question from a member of the Scrutiny Committee regarding the timeline and context of these increases, ACC Kearton confirmed that the statistics related to the last twelve months. The member referred to accusations of alleged offences which, in some cases, were historical; he asked how the police evidenced that an offence had or had not occurred in such circumstances. ACC Kearton advised that if a person, or a third party, stated that a crime had been committed then a report had to be taken and the police must investigate. ACC Kearton emphasised that the police role was to investigate allegations which were then pursued, or not, by the Crime Prosecution Service through the application of criminal justice processes.

Another member suggested that the increased number of serious sexual offences indicated improved awareness and that victims were actively encouraged to report; he asked if incidents of domestic abuse crime were similarly raised because of improved reporting or if there had been an "actual" increase in such crimes. In responding, ACC Kearton said it was important to remember that Suffolk was a very safe county and crime figures, overall, were comparatively low. With regard to domestic abuse crimes, ACC Kearton said the increased figure was the result of both better recording processes – through improved technology and systems – and because victims had more confidence in reporting. In addition, ACC Kearton referred to a new telephony system which prioritised calls, such as those related to domestic abuse offences. It was also acknowledged that a small number of crimes might result in a significant percentage rise if the overall figures were low to start with.

ACC Kearton continued to update the Scrutiny Committee on new and existing challenges. These included:

- County Lines – A serious issue whereby criminal gangs set up a drug dealing operation in a place outside their usual operating area. This had resulted in increased drugs supply and the exploitation of the vulnerable, as well as violence including gun and knife crime.
- Youth gang violence
- Radicalisation and terrorism
- Increased cyber-enabled crime
- Hidden harm including human trafficking, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery offences

ACC Kearton referred to the identification and management of change; in particular, she highlighted the Constabulary's Suffolk 2025 team which focused on continuous improvement and innovation to ensure modernisation through collaboration, the use of technology and the identification and implementation of best practice. The Scrutiny Committee was also advised that the Constabulary's financial planning processes focused on savings considerations and provided robust scrutiny and oversight. ACC Kearton referred to the Constabulary's strong governance and programme management of all its change processes.

The Scrutiny Committee was informed that body-worn video devices for all frontline officers across the county had been delivered and deployed. Officers had received comprehensive training in the use of the video devices and a further roll-out to other Suffolk policing units was planned during the next phase of the project. ACC Kearton said the use of such devices had resulted in improved outcomes in assault and domestic abuse cases and provided support to charging decisions and prosecutions. There had also been a reduction in numbers of false or illegitimate complaints against police officers and a perceived growth in public confidence.

ACC Kearton outlined the Constabulary's further use of frontline mobile devices through the provision of increased mobile capabilities and applications with some 600 tablets having been deployed to frontline police officers. ACC Kearton said a benefit of this objective was that officers and staff had improved access without the need to return to a police premises, thereby enabling increased time to be spent in the community. It had also allowed specialist roles, such as forensics, to have additional mobility. The project had also included the digitalisation of paper forms etc.

As previously mentioned, ACC Kearton updated the Scrutiny Committee on the Constabulary's new telephony system within the Contact and Control Room. The new system allowed the Contact and Control Room to prioritise calls around threat, risk and harm thereby helping to ensure those who were most vulnerable were given precedence much earlier in the call process. ACC Kearton added that, once a caller to 101 had been assessed, those presenting as a higher risk would be prioritised; the handling process for calls to the 999 system would remain unaltered.

ACC Kearton, with reference to cyber crime, said Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies had a joint cyber crime investigations team within the Serious and Organised Crime department. The joint team worked to pursue those individuals who engaged in cyber and serious crime to seek criminal justice outcomes, to prevent individuals from becoming, or remaining, in cyber and serious crime, to protect the public from becoming victims of cyber or serious crime, and to prepare for the consequences of cyber or serious crime. ACC Kearton added

that, following an investment by the Police and Crime Commissioner in August 2016, nine Cyber investigators and a Cyber Supervisor had been recruited and located within Neighbourhood Support Teams at three locations. The Cyber Investigators had three principal functions: - to provide specialist tactical support and advice to crime with a cyber-element; to investigate cyber-enabled offences; and, to promote and deliver effective 'prevent and protect' messages. The Scrutiny Committee was informed that the most common type of cyber-enabled offences were disputes for non-payment or non-delivery of goods or services via E-bay or Gumtree sites; the fraudulent obtaining of money from individuals using the internet, for example, phishing scams or fraud using chat rooms or dating websites; and, harassment and malicious communications via social media, emails or apps.

The Chairman thanked ACC Kearton for her presentation and invited questions from members of the Committee.

Whilst welcoming the increased use of technology, a member asked if this would also help to provide a more visible police presence which, he suggested, many residents, particularly the elderly, preferred. ACC Kearton acknowledged that the county's elderly population had to be engaged with in alternative ways and referred to the recent introduction of nine Engagement Officers, working within Safer Neighbourhood Teams, who would be 'specialists' in their local area and communities. She added that these officers would engage with all areas of the community through various routes including, for example, clubs, drop-in centres, community hubs, outside of schools etc.

The Cabinet Member referred to the current establishment of Officers and asked if the nine Engagement Officers were additional to that establishment, or officers already employed within the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT), but with an additional role. ACC Kearton said the Engagement Officers were newly appointed and had a new profile, consequently, they did not have other roles within the SNT. She added that the Officers had originated from a variety of other positions and had applied for the posts which would provide the central point for the Constabulary's engagement with communities. In response to a further question from the Cabinet Member about the establishment figures, ACC Kearton confirmed that some police officer roles were, instead, being made staff roles with delivery redesigned.

In response to a question by a member of the Committee about complaints, ACC Kearton referred briefly to the Constabulary's very thorough complaints process. The member also asked about the Constabulary's approach to problems with anti-social behaviour. ACC Kearton said that methods of addressing this issue were working well; she acknowledged that there was always more that could be done, for example, increased visibility at certain times of the day. ACC Kearton added that a shift review was being undertaken to further overlay resources with demand.

Another member of the Committee referred to the 6.8% increase in the precept and asked where, specifically, the additional funds would be spent; the member asked if any of the additional funds would be targeted at rural crime. ACC referred the Committee to a financial position graph within a tabled document she had provided. This indicated that the agreed increase in the policing element of the Council Tax precept had raised an additional £2.9m which would primarily be used towards budgetary pressures on the Constabulary

such as pay inflation, inflation on goods and services, and investments in the capital programme. The indicative figures within the document were:

- £1.8m pay inflation
- £0.6m non pay inflation
- £0.4m protecting reserves
- £0.6m budgetary pressures
- £0.7m impact of the national ICT programme
- £0.3m revenue funding required for the capital programme

In response to a question about the admissibility of video from body-worn recording devices, ACC Kearton confirmed that they were fully admissible as evidence and emphasised the robustness of the devices including security features which meant videos were not able to be edited etc.

The member further asked what measures the police were able to take to address fraudulent cold-calls and their impact, particularly on the elderly. ACC Kearton said that, unfortunately, this aspect of crime was frequently evolving into new scams but, the Cyber Investigators referred to earlier in the meeting, would endeavour to prevent people inadvertently becoming a victim of this fraudulent activity as well as investigating the crimes. She added that it was important to remove or reduce any embarrassment victims might feel and to encourage increased reporting.

With reference to a question by another member related to the crime statistics provided earlier in the meeting, ACC Kearton referred to her earlier remarks about the Constabulary's better recording processes – through improved technology and systems – and repeated that victims had more confidence to report crimes. ACC Kearton also suggested that, with regard to domestic abuse crimes, it was probable that, if compared to the 1950s or 1960s, the figures were broadly similar whilst awareness of the crime itself had increased. The Cabinet Member emphasised that the face of crime had also changed significantly, as had the way it was recorded.

In response to a question about a Town Council's funding of a PCSO for a reduced term, ACC Kearton said all aspects of local policing delivery were currently under review with the results anticipated later in 2018.

Another member asked for some additional detail on the approach to the County Lines issue. ACC Kearton said she believed this issue, which largely involved very young people, was a societal issue and it would require a multi-agency approach of many organisations to deal with it effectively. Suffolk Constabulary provided enforcement measures and, sometimes, the best action might be to arrest so that the young person could be fast-tracked into social care support. The Cabinet Member referred to a workshop to be held in June by Suffolk Coastal District Council to focus on this issue; he said the Council played an important role in both preventative measures and the raising of awareness.

With reference to the Constabulary's budgetary pressures, a member of the Committee asked if the potential for a merger with Norfolk Constabulary might be considered. ACC Kearton said there were legislative reasons for the structure of policing operations, but referred to a current proposal to merge two county police services in the West Country. She

added that presently Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies shared many resources and had joint teams for certain purposes.

Another member referred to a recent announcement by central government that additional funding would be available to address violent crime, she asked if Suffolk was likely to receive any funds or if it was likely to be used in areas where the issue was more significant. ACC Kearton said the government had allocated £11m for its serious violent crime strategy, however, the government's proposals for how funds would be used were awaited; she added that there was also the potential that funds might be shared with other agencies.

The Chairman thanked ACC Kearton for attending the meeting and for her comprehensive overview of policing across Suffolk including the demands and challenges currently being experienced, as well as her responses to the questions of the Committee.

5. Verbal update on the Provision of Affordable Broadband

The Committee received a brief verbal update by the Member Working Group.

6. Consideration of the Committee's Forward Work Programme

The Committee reviewed its Forward Work Programme and agreed the remit and scope for an additional item to be received in July 2018.

The meeting concluded at 7.55pm