



Norfolk Police and Crime Panel

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 16th February 2016 at 10.00 a.m.
Edwards Room, County Hall, Norwich**

Main Panel Members Present:

Mr Alec Byrne	Norfolk County Council
Mr Mick Castle	Norfolk County Council
Mr Keith Driver	Norwich City Council
Mr Roger Foulger	Broadland District Council
Mr Brian Hannah	Norfolk County Council
Dr Christopher Kemp	South Norfolk Council
Mr Brian Long	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Council
Mr William Richmond	Breckland Council
Mr Richard Shepherd	North Norfolk District Council

Officers Present

Mr Greg Insull	Assistant Head of Democratic Services
Mrs Jo Martin	Democratic Services and Scrutiny Support Manager

Others Present

Mr Stephen Bett	Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk
Mr J Hummersone	Chief Finance Officer, OPCCN & Norfolk Constabulary
Mr Mark Stokes	Chief Executive, OPCCN

1. To receive apologies and details of any substitute members attending

- 1.1 Apologies received from Mr F Whymark (substituted by Mr R Foulger), Mr T Jermy (substituted by Mr M Castle), Mr A Sommerville, Ms S Brooks and Ms K Stenhouse.

2. Members to Declare any Interests

- 2.1 No declarations were made.

3. To receive any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency

3.1 None

4 Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk's proposed precept for 2016-17

4.1 The Panel received the report from Jo Martin, Democratic Support and Scrutiny Team Manager which outlined the options for the Panel to consider regarding the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk's revised precept for 2016/17.

4.2 The Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer went through the Commissioner's revised budget report and highlighted the following points:-

- It was important to note that an increase in the council tax would not create additional funding but would create a balanced budget.
- Whatever option was chosen, the Constabulary would still need to find efficiencies during the next couple of years.
- The Norfolk Local Policing Review (Norfolk 2020) would be looking into the deficits and the challenges and pressures facing the Constabulary and would provide a report in the summer.

4.3 The Commissioner addressed the Panel and outlined the reasons for his revised precept proposal (attached Appendix A).

4.4 The Panel discussed the Commissioner's revised proposal and asked questions of the Commissioner and his staff. The following points were discussed:-

- While the sentiment of keeping tax low for the people of Norfolk was admirable, the need to maintain local funding meant that the increase in the precept should be supported. A freeze would be inconsistent with plans to increase council tax in other areas.
- Norfolk's Police and Crime Panel was the only one in the country to have exercised its veto in relation to a freeze
- It was noted that Norfolk Constabulary was held in high esteem nationally and its good reputation could only continue if it had the funds to operate at the standard expected.
- The Chief Constable would decide where the funding would be focused but it was highlighted that the £350k that had come from restructuring the Commissioner's Office had been ring fenced for funding more PCSO's in schools.

4.5 Dr C Kemp proposed, seconded by Mr B Hannah that the Panel agree to support the Commissioner's revised precept proposal without qualification or comment.

The Panel unanimously **Agreed**.

- 4.6 The Panel **RESOLVED** to support the Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk's revised precept proposal to increase the police and crime element of the council tax in 2016-17 by 1.98% (£4.14 per annum) to £212.94 for a Band D property.

The meeting closed at 10:20am.

CHAIRMAN



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Appendix A

Thank you Chairman.

As you know, when I addressed you a fortnight ago I outlined the reasons why I was intending to freeze the policing element of the Council Tax for the next year.

That decision was made after carefully weighing up all the options, but it was a decision made “on balance”.

I said that at the time the decision on whether to raise the amount people pay for their policing is never an easy one – and one I have never taken lightly.

I explained that during my many years involved with policing in Norfolk I have always taken a decision based on what I felt was best for both the people of Norfolk and the force.

I acknowledged that it was extremely heartening to see that the majority of the near two and a half thousand people who responded to our consultation – some 64% - would be prepared to dig a little deeper and pay more for their policing if they needed to.

Panel members will not need reminding of the stark messages from the county’s Chief Constable at the last meeting. No-one in the room could be left in any doubt that policing faces huge challenges.

The Chief Constable pleas did not fall on deaf ears but - as I also made it clear last time - the Chancellor and Home Secretary pulled a huge financial rabbit out of the hat in announcing the protection of police budgets - and that move gave us options.

On balance I decided to propose a freeze.

However; I was not prepared for the depth of feeling from Members on the day in favour of a maximum 2% rise, especially given the political makeup of the panel.

I have to say that took me by surprise.

I have been accused of one or two things down the years – in fact I was accused of one or two things at the last meeting – but one thing I always

try and do is listen. I have prided myself on being a “Listening PCC” and have always tried to leave the politics at the front door.

If I was not expecting a veto last time, I was certainly not expecting a vote of 9 to 1. It was a majority I could not ignore.

I can assure you my original proposal was sincere, and it was made after carefully weighing up all the options.

However, I now find myself in a position where when I add the weight of opinion of the Members of the Panel to the views of the public and the impassioned pleas of the Chief Constable I find the scales tipping in favour of a 2% increase.

As I said two weeks ago I am Norfolk born and Norfolk bred and I want what is best for our county - and that remains the case.