

Runnymede Borough Council

CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE

19 April 2011 at 7.30pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors C J Chapman (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), R J Edis, J M Edwards, Mrs L Gillham, A M Moore, C J Norman and A P Tollett

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors H A Butterfield and Mrs R M Denby

678. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Fire Precautions were read out.

679. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

Group Requiring Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor P B Tuley	Councillor R J Edis

The Chief Executive had given effect to these wishes in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

680. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 July 2010 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

681. COMMUNITY SAFETY FUNDING

The Committee was informed of Home Office grant funding for community safety functions for 2011/12 and 2012/13.

The Community Safety Fund for Surrey would be subject to cash reductions of 20% this financial year against the 2010/11 Resource baseline and 60% in 2012/13. The allocation of this funding would be determined by the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership Board (SSCPB), which was part of the Surrey Strategic Partnership and chaired by the Chief Constable.

In addition to the basic Community Safety Funding from the Home Office, contributions were received towards domestic abuse victim support from the Police, Surrey County Council and the PCT, which next year would total £230,461. The SSCPB had decided to topslice funding to provide for domestic abuse victim support, alcohol intervention services and Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) staffing and administrative costs. However, a reduction of 10% for the first two and 20% for DAAT was being applied.

In addition, 20% of the remaining budget was being topsliced for contingency due to uncertainty of some expected funding streams and to smooth any in-year changes from review of structures, staffing and services.

The remaining funding was then being distributed across all of the boroughs and districts on a ratio basis, of which 80% related to percentage of overall crime in the county and 20% based on percentage of overall population.

Runnymede's allocation was based on 8.3% of crimes and 7.5% population which gave an overall proportion of 8.2% which equated to £30,537. Surrey County Council's allocation to each borough was £14,500 of which £12,000 (per borough) had been topsliced. This left a residual allocation of £2,500 to each borough.

This gave a Runnymede allocation of £33,037 to which was normally added a Runnymede contribution which equated to a proportion of the combined contribution from the Police and Surrey County Council. For 2011/12 this would represent £7,250, or an overall budget of £40,287.

The Runnymede contribution towards Domestic Abuse victim support in the past had been around £33,000. It was understood that this would now be funded centrally by the SSCPB from the topsliced funding. The SSCPB was also looking for central procurement of all the services for which funding had been topsliced.

The core activity of community safety revolved around the work of two multi-agency groups, the Community Incident Action Group (CIAG) and the Joint Action Group (JAG). These groups were supported by two part-time members of staff (1.4FTE), the combined salary for whom was £38,600 in 2011/12. This sum was within the allocation being made available from SSCPB.

In Runnymede's budget for 2011/12 an assumption was made that there would be no government income support, therefore the full cost of Community Safety fell to the general fund. The actual income of £33,000 therefore represented a saving on the budget albeit it only recouped part of what was effectively a growth item.

The SSCPB had initially looked at two potential scenarios for funding LSPs in 2012/13. The first was based on maintaining funding for domestic abuse outreach and drug & alcohol services at the same levels as 2011/12. When the contributions from RBC and SCC were added this would total £15,777 for Runnymede.

The second scenario was based on a further reduction of 20% in domestic abuse outreach and a 40% reduction to drug & alcohol services in 2012/13, which would give Runnymede a budget of £26,306.

Funding for the Community Safety Manager was part of the council's core services, however funding for the two part-time support workers had been dependent on government grant. Both posts were valuable to the core activity of community safety.

The reduction in grant meant that community safety activity would reduce to supporting core activity only, i.e. supporting the CIAG and JAG. Other projects and initiatives which were previously funded such as the schools construction bus, 'The Biz' and the Junior Citizen Programme could no longer be supported.

The Director of Technical Services would take the opportunity over the current financial year to shape the future service in anticipation of more severe cuts in government grant from 2012/13.

The Committee commented that the timing of the announcement of the Home Office Grant was unhelpful as it had been made after the Council's budget setting.

682. POLICE REFORM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BILL

The Committee was informed of proposals contained within this Bill and the implications both for this authority and for future relationships with the Police.

Under the Bill's proposals, Police Authorities would be abolished and replaced with Police and Crime Commissioners for each force outside of London, with the Mayor of London taking the role in the capital. Their salaries would be set by the Home Secretary on the advice of the Senior Salaries Review Body, and many of their functions would be broadly similar to those of Police Authorities.

Elections for commissioners would be every four years from May 2012 and held on the same day as local elections. The elections would be by the supplementary vote system and Commissioners would be limited to serving two terms.

Commissioners would be required to produce a Police and Crime Plan, consulting local people on its content. Chief Constables would also have to have regard to the Plan. Commissioners would have to publish information to allow local people to assess their performance and that of Chief Constables.

Councils would have to jointly establish a Police and Crime Panel to scrutinise the work of their Commissioner. In two-tier areas such as Surrey this would be a single panel and consist of a minimum of ten councillors and two co-opted members. In Surrey's case it would be one Member representative per Borough. The Panels would have to represent the political make up of the local area.

The Panel would review and report on the draft Police and Crime Plan, review the annual report, review the Commissioner's proposed budget, review or scrutinise decisions taken by the Commissioner, and publish any reports it made to the Commissioner.

Commissioners and Community Safety Partnerships would be able to enter into collaboration agreements covering more than one partnership, to produce strategies for reducing crime and disorder. A Commissioner would be able to compel partnerships to produce strategies if they were not doing so – a role currently held by the Home Secretary.

Chief Constables would have to obtain the views of people in a neighbourhood about crime and disorder through regular meetings with local police Officers and the public. Commissioners would be able to appoint, suspend or dismiss the Chief Constable, although the power to appoint deputy and assistant Chief Constables would sit with the Chief Constable not the Commissioner.

The appointment of a Chief Constable would be subject to approval by the Police and Crime Panel who would be able to veto candidates on a three-quarters majority vote, although a veto by a two thirds majority vote would be preferable to increase the authority of Panels. If the Commissioner wished to dismiss a chief constable the Panel would have to hold a scrutiny hearing and make a report to the Commissioner.

The proposals to move away from national targets and priorities and reduction in bureaucracy and emphasis on local issues and concerns was welcomed.

There were concerns about the proposed Police Commissioners whereby the power of the current Police Authority would rest with a single directly elected individual. Apart from capacity issues, competing electoral mandates could pull police and councils in different directions which would fragment local partnerships. There was also the issue of the recovery of costs by local authorities of the Commissioner elections.

In terms of Police and Crime Panels, the ability to veto a Police Commissioner's budget (as opposed to a costly public referendum) and power of approval over a Commissioner's recommended appointment of Chief Constable was welcomed. Whilst the vast majority of Panel members would be local Councillors, the limit of only one per Borough in Surrey was of concern.

The Home Office's commitment to the protection of police operational independence would make it difficult for Commissioners to hold Chief Constables to account, and provided a means for Chief Constables to sidestep answering to the Commissioner should they so wish. It was right that the police operate free from political interference, but all public officials including Chief Constables should be fully accountable.

In terms of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), there was concern that these should not be compelled to come together at a force level. Whilst retained at a Borough or joint borough level there was the disadvantage that partners may have to attend several CSP meetings and that economies of scale might be lost, it was considered that this was outweighed by the advantage of looking at crime and disorder issues which were very often at a very local neighbourhood level.

In terms of licensing, the Bill, when enacted, would amend the Licensing Act 2003 and how it was operated by licensing authorities.

The proposal that licensing authorities would themselves become 'responsible authorities' was welcomed. This would enable them to make representations and ask for reviews in the same way as the Police, fire authorities and local authorities exercising health and safety, local planning, environmental health and child protection functions.

Officers reported that local authorities would be given more flexibility to allow temporary events to go ahead rather than having to adhere to the current rigid rules which had led to the cancellation of 'low risk' events, despite their potential benefit to the local community. There would also be new Temporary Events powers which would enable councils to protect local communities from noisy, disruptive or dangerous events. Officers also confirmed that the maximum period a temporary event would be extended to was seven days. This would benefit events like school plays but could also mean that events that attracted complaints about noise and crime and disorder would also be controlled more readily.

The Committee was also pleased that licensing authorities would also gain new powers to suspend licences where annual fees were not paid. Members were aware that the Council had unpaid fees relating to 14 of 280 licensed premises in Runnymede amounting to £3,200.

Officers confirmed that there were no proposals for reforming licensing fees which had remained unchanged since the 'first appointed day' in February 2005. Members noted that the local council tax payer was still subsidising the licensing system, due to the shortfall between centrally set fees and the true cost of administering the licensing system. To address this concern, the Local Government Association would be urging the Government to introduce amendments to the Bill to enable local authorities to change locally set fees, reflecting licensing costs. However Members were pleased that fines for underage sales would be doubled from £10,000 to £20,000.

It was agreed that the proposals were generally seen as positive, as they would reduce bureaucracy and speed up the process for dealing with complaints for concerned residents and businesses.

Generally, Members expressed concern over the short timescale for implementation of the measures in the Bill and the associated costs. Furthermore, the Bill was lacking in detailed guidance which inevitably would come forward in Regulations at a much later stage, which would not help local authorities in their preparations.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.00pm)