



COUNCIL - 26TH JUNE 2012

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A POLICE AND CRIME PANEL IN THE GWENT POLICE FORCE AREA

REPORT BY: DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members of the progress made in connection with the establishment of the new Police and Crime Panel (PCP) required under the provisions of Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, to approve a recommendation that Caerphilly Borough Council should be the host local authority for the area and to take nominations from Council for Members to sit on the PCP.

2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Report links with the aspirations of the Council's Community Strategy to promote a safe environment for its residents by improving community safety and quality of life by reducing crime and fear of crime.

3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 introduces Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take over the role previously undertaken by a Police Authority in holding a police force to account. A PCC will also have additional responsibilities for commissioning community safety work and in ensuring effective and efficient operation of the criminal justice system. PCCs will be elected for the first time in November 2012. Under the Act, Police and Crime Panels are also to be established in each police force area with the role of scrutinising and supporting a PCC and have to be in place by October 2012.
- 3.2 Police and Crime Panels are to be made up of at least 10 elected councillors and 2 lay members/co-optees. While Panels can be as large as 20 members, any additional members over the basic number of 12 will need to be agreed by the Home Secretary. The Act also sets out the need for the Panel's membership to be 'balanced' in terms of make-up of the local area, including the political make-up and the required skills, knowledge and experience for the panel to function effectively. In Wales, due to the drafting of the legislation, establishing PCPs is the responsibility of the Home Secretary. However in a letter to local authorities dated 8th March 2012, she acknowledged that the best and most meaningful arrangements are those that are agreed locally and as such she invited local authorities to collectively agree Panel membership, hosting and operational arrangements. A response has been requested by July 2012. Should authorities not respond, or decide not to take a role in establishing a Panel, the Home Secretary retains the power to nominate members directly from a local authority.

- 3.3 To help facilitate discussions on the work required to establish PCPs, the WLGA facilitated a 'development day' for authorities earlier this year. More recently, meetings have been arranged by the WLGA with the Chief Executives and officers from across the Gwent Force area and on the 18th June 2012 the Gwent Police Joint Committee met to discuss options for progressing and establishing the new PCP.
- 3.4 Caerphilly County Borough Council has offered, subject to Council approval, to be the host local authority for the area, taking on the responsibility of establishing and supporting a PCP. No other offers have been made. Should Caerphilly be agreed as the host, in responding to the Home Secretary it is proposed that this be a 'conditional offer' as there are concerns that the finance to be provided by the Home Office will not be sufficient for its purpose. It is hoped that an agreement with the Home Office will be reached on how any exceptional costs, beyond business as normal, will be met which will provide some reassurance.
- 3.5 The existing Gwent Police Joint Committee consists of 9 elected member representatives (2 members from Caerphilly, Newport, and Monmouthshire 1 seat for Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent plus 1 additional seat that rotates between Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen).
- 3.6 In determining the numbers to form the PCP a number of options were considered by the Welsh Local Government Association in conjunction with representatives from the five local authorities namely:-
- (a) 10 elected members, with the number of members from each authority determined on numbers of the population
 - (b) 10 elected members, with 2 members representing each of the 5 authorities
 - (c) 12 elected members, with 2 members representing each of the 5 authorities and an additional member from Caerphilly and Newport to reflect their larger populations
- 3.7 At the meeting of the Gwent Police Joint Committee held on 18th June 2012 it was agreed that option (b) should be taken forward as the preferred option at this time, subject to an application being submitted by the shadow Panel (referred to in paragraph 3.8) following its first meeting to the Home Office for approval of two extra members to reflect the additional population of Caerphilly and Newport County Boroughs.
- 3.8 It was also agreed at the meeting on 18th June 2012 that a shadow Panel in advance of October 2012, should be established so that it can; appoint two co-opted independent members, agree the rules of procedure, consider a training programme and a work programme for the first year. Arrangements for the timing and venue of this meeting have yet to be finalised.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no potential equalities implications of this Report and its recommendations on groups or individuals who fall under the categories identified in section 6 of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. There is no requirement for an Equalities Impact Assessment Questionnaire to be completed for this Report.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 It is proposed that Caerphilly County Borough Council, subject to Council approval will be the lead local authority for the PCP, and, within the overall budget allocated by the Home Office, will provide support to the PCP and its members, led by a named lead officer supplemented as required by additional specialist officers.

- 5.2 The Home Office has indicated that it will provide £53,300 per annum to support the PCP, plus up to £920 towards expenses per PCP member.
- 5.3 There are concerns that the current budget will be insufficient and hence the offer by Caerphilly is a conditional offer and it is hoped that agreement will be reached with the Home Office that additional funding will be met by the Home Officer to meet exceptional costs, beyond normal business. If this assurance is not forthcoming a further Report will be prepared for consideration by members.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Report reflects the view of the Consultees.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Council is **RECOMMENDED** to :-

- (i) To note the establishment of a Police and Crime Panel for Gwent Force Area and the arrangements to set up a Shadow Panel in advance of October 2012;
- (ii) To agree the nomination of Caerphilly County Borough Council as host local authority on a conditional basis;
- (iii) To nominate two members to the PCP and appoint a named substitute for each appointed member. (Appointed members and their named substitutes must be from the same political group).

8. STATUTORY POWER

- 8.1 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

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Cllr. Harry Andrews, Leader