

Bartleet House, 165a Birmingham Road,
Bromsgrove, Worcestershire B61 0DJ
Direct Line: 01527 882002 Fax: 01527 882005
Email: Drusilla.sharpling@hmic.gsi.gov.uk

Drusilla Sharpling, CBE
Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary

28 September 2012

Mr Peter Heffer
Chair – Avon and Somerset Police Authority

Mr John Smith
Chief Executive – Avon and Somerset Police Authority

Dear Peter and John,

HMIC Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Budget Preparedness Visits

Thank you for the time the police authority spent with the HMIC team on 12 September 2012. The meeting presented an opportunity for you to provide an overview of your budget development process for 2013/14, the funds identified for transition and the development of potential models of governance, decision making and accountability.

I am writing to provide you with a summary of the discussions and to highlight any areas that emerged for further consideration.

Budget setting process

You are taking a 'business as usual' and well established approach to your 2013/14 budget setting process. Your medium-term financial planning is being regularly refreshed and updated and you have completed a detailed analysis of the impact on your budget from a wide range of factors, including new council tax benefit localisation arrangements, the council tax base, the police precept component of local council tax (precept) and grant income.

You are engaging with stakeholders and prospective PCC candidates to brief them on the budget outlook and you have more events of this type planned in the next couple of months. You are meeting with the police and crime panel (PCP) in October and December to further discuss the budget setting process and how this supports the development of the police and crime plan.

Preparation of scenarios to support the PCC in setting the budget

You have prepared a range of alternative scenarios for the incoming PCC to consider in order to assist with setting the budget. These include a worst case scenario which involves a precept freeze and scenarios based on a precept

increase over the spending review period. The implications of each scenario on the force's savings requirement has been calculated as well as plans for how these savings might be made.

Workforce and service impact

You described your current workforce plans which are progressing as planned and while you are not expecting any changes to your workforce projections for the next two years you will be reassessing the position from 2015/16 onwards. The authority's planning principles are based on prioritising the front line. Similarly, none of the scenarios you have explored are expected to result in major changes to existing service delivery plans, although you acknowledge that once more information on the next comprehensive spending review is available this may change.

The authority and constabulary continue to work with regional partners and, through the Police Authority Joint Committee, are making sure that all collaboration arrangements are placed on a formal footing to ensure the sustainability of current arrangements. The authority continues to pursue options for collaborating with others as a means of increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

Forward planning: governance and the Office of the PCC (OPCC)

You have set aside a small transition budget to take account of any one-off costs and the provisional budget for the OPCC is based on the current police authority budget.

You have identified the principles for how the OPCC will operate and comprehensive arrangements are being put in place for when the PCC takes up office. You have considered staffing requirements and identified areas where further support may be needed such as commissioning services. You have an induction plan and diary for the PCC's first 100 days which identifies essential activities. A legacy document will provide key information to assist the PCC in their early days.

You have already developed a decision making process which is flexible and able to deal with different types of decision and you are trialling a lead member model process with decisions you are currently making while ensuring business as usual. You are also thinking through a range of options for how the public will be updated on key decisions.

You are now focussing on drafting your schemes of consent and delegation and are using national guidance to assist you with this. An interim Joint Audit Committee has already been set up.

You are still developing a range of options for how the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account. Although this is work in progress you are drawing on guidance issued by the Association of Police Authority Chief Executives (APACE)

and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) to assist you with this and you are clear on the menu of options you will be using.

In summary, you have a well established budget development process which is based on prudent assumptions and takes account of a broad range of funding scenarios. You are also developing a range of options for the PCC to consider once in post to assist them in delivering their statutory functions.

Your plans for how the OPCC will operate to support the PCC in delivering their statutory functions are comprehensive. Your decision making processes have been thought through and are now being tested to identify any issues. While your governance options for how the PCC might hold the Chief Constable to account are still work in progress, you have a clear idea of what the options are and are using national guidance to assist in developing these further. You fully understand that it will be a matter for the PCC which, if any, options they choose to adopt.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the police authority for its continuing commitment to plan and prepare for the transition to a PCC.

Yours sincerely



Drusilla Sharpling
HM Inspector of Constabulary
Wales and Western Region

Copied:

Mr Colin Port OBE
Chief Constable – Avon and Somerset Constabulary

Mr Sean Price
HMIC Liaison Officer