

Zoë Billingham BA Hons (Oxon)
HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

28 September 2012

Mr Peter Conniff
Chair – Bedfordshire Police Authority

Ms Stephanie McMenemy
Chief Executive – Bedfordshire Police Authority

Dear Peter and Stephanie,

HMIC Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Budget Preparedness Visits

Thank you for the time the police authority spent with the HMIC team on 10 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 our discussions and to highlight areas that emerged for further consideration.

Budget setting process

You have a well established budget setting process and you are taking a 'business as usual' approach. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is regularly reviewed and was updated on 31 August 2012 – this identified a budget gap of £4.7m for 2013/2014. By preparing detailed plans you are putting in place the foundations for the PCC to take the decisions necessary for determining future budget planning. The force is currently reviewing its operating model which will determine how policing services are delivered across the county.

A key issue for the PCC will be whether to support the outsourcing of the force support functions as this decision will have a significant bearing on the budget setting process. These plans have been developed in collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire.

Preparation of scenarios to support the PCC in setting the budget

You are preparing a range of scenarios for the incoming PCC to consider in order to assist with setting the budget. As well as decisions on outsourcing and the policing model you have also considered different scenarios based on precept and changes to other funding.

Workforce and service impact

You have developed a variety of options for the PCC to consider. As well as the outsourcing proposal the authority is also continuing to develop other collaborative arrangements with Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire as a means of increasing efficiency and effectiveness, and reducing costs.

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

You have set up a transition board which has developed a set of proposals for governance and decision making.

The authority is working to develop the governance and decision making frameworks necessary to support the PCC. You have drawn on guidance issued by the Association of Police Authority Chief Executives (APACE) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) to assist you with this. You are developing a full set of proposals that will enable the PCC to meet their statutory duties from the day of appointment. This is particularly important given some of the key decisions that the PCC will need to make soon after being appointed and some key challenges to setting the budget.

You recognise that these proposals may develop in light of further national guidance and following the discussions you will be having with the PCC.

You are working constructively with the force and partners to prepare for the development of the police and crime plan together with the budget that can deliver it. The police authority has established arrangements for a Joint Audit Committee for the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable.

The OPCC is based on existing functions so as to enable the PCC to function effectively while still allowing the opportunity to exercise their own preference.

A shadow police and crime panel (PCP) has been established and has had two meetings.

In summary, your budget development process is based on prudent assumptions and takes account of a range of funding scenarios. You are developing proposals for PCC governance arrangements, decision making and accountability. Once in post the PCC will have options to consider and these should assist them in delivering their statutory functions.

I hope that the above comments are beneficial as you continue to plan and prepare for transition to a PCC.

Yours sincerely



Zoë Billingham
HM Inspector of Constabulary, Eastern Region

Copied:
Mr Alfred Hitchcock
Chief Constable – Bedfordshire Police

Mr Edward Major
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