

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

Mrs Cilla Davies OBE JP
Chair – Gwent Police Authority

Mr Shelley Bosson
Chief Executive – Gwent Police Authority

Dear Cilla and Shelley,

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

Your budget setting process is in place and your plans are based on up-to-date and prudent assumptions. You are taking a 'business as usual' approach while also allowing flexibility for the incoming PCC. This has included early consideration of likely cost pressures and plans for meeting identified budget shortfalls.

You have taken the view that based on current information you can meet the expected budget shortfalls through savings from the Staying Ahead Programme, existing reserves and a 2.66 percent annual precept rise for 2013/14 and 2014/15. A detailed report, including timelines for setting the 2013/14 budget, was discussed at the September audit and resources meeting.

Prospective PCC candidates have been briefed on the budget outlook and you have other events planned in the run up to the elections. Police authority officers have also been working closely with local authority officers on an induction for police and crime panel members which will include a budget briefing.

Preparation of scenarios to support the PCC in setting the budget

While you have prepared the 2013/14 draft budget on the basis of a precept rise, you are mindful of the implications of alternative scenarios and have prepared a range of scenarios based on different levels of precept, including a precept freeze. You have started to brief prospective PCC candidates on these different scenarios and their implications.

Workforce and service impact

You described your current workforce plans and you do not anticipate any significant changes to existing service delivery plans until 2014/15. However, for the next spending review period, you acknowledge that the position will need to be reassessed.

You are continuing to actively pursue collaborative opportunities with other Welsh forces and are monitoring the position on partnership funding.

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

Your provisional budget for the OPCC is based on the current police authority budget. On current projections, you expect that this budget will also be able to meet any one-off transition costs arising from setting up the OPCC.

You have developed a governance model for the incoming PCC and a supporting infrastructure. Arrangements developed to support the OPCC include a framework for recording and the publication of decisions made by the PCC. A draft scheme of consent is being developed and proposals shared with the prospective PCC candidates. Key legacy issues are being identified and will be included, together with horizon scanning, in a handover document for the PCC. You are applying learning from the experiences of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime in your options planning.

You are continuing to brief prospective PCC candidates on your plans and have developed a plan for the first 130 days to assist the PCC in making key decisions. You have planned days to allow the PCC to deal with briefings and submissions. You are now developing a range of options for how the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account which include informal weekly meetings. You are drawing on national guidance from the Association of Police Authority Chief Executives and the Association of Police Authorities to assist with this. You are also developing plans on how they will engage the public and keep them informed.

You are developing a communications strategy and public accountability framework to support your draft police and crime plan. You also have a clear approach for establishing a joint audit committee. These plans have already been shared with key stakeholders, including prospective PCC candidates.

In summary, you have a well established budget development process which is based on prudent assumptions and takes account of different scenarios. You are developing proposals for PCC governance arrangements and whilst some areas are more advanced than others you are aware of what is required and have a plan so that a range of options will be finalised in advance of the election and available for you to brief the incoming PCC. You fully understand that it will be a matter for the PCC which, if any option, 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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drusilla Sharpling', written in a cursive style.

Drusilla Sharpling
HM Inspector of Constabulary

Copied:

Ms Carmel Napier QPM
Chief Constable – Gwent Police

Mr John Metcalfe
HMIC Liaison Officer