**Friday June 7th, 2013**

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**Item 7**

**Old Restaurant, Wakefield Town Hall**

**Local Perspectives: the impact of the Commissioner**

**1. Purpose**

* 1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Panel of the work and views of the district Community Safety Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees. Updates have been received from all five Scrutiny Committees and four of the five Community Safety Partnerships in accordance with the protocols agreed between the Police and Crime Panel and the local bodies.
  2. It is recommended that the Panel notes the common trends and views highlighted in the report. Suggestions for future work may be included in the Panel’s work programme and members may also wish to raise certain issues with the Commissioner.

**2. Views from Community Safety Partnerships**

2.1 Responses were received from four district Community Safety Partnerships (Bradford, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield).

2.2 Partnerships reflected on the extent to which the Police and Crime Plan reflected the agreed priorities in district-level Community Safety Plans. Each felt that local priorities were incorporated into the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan and that there was strong evidence that parties had ‘given regard to’ each other’s priorities.

2.3 Whilst Partnerships pointed out that it was premature to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which the Commissioner is acting in accordance with the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan, there was widespread appreciation of the commitment the Commissioner has shown to get out, meet and engage with communities across West Yorkshire. It is felt this provides a strong foundation for delivering the Police and Crime Plan. Partnerships also recognised the Commissioner’s helpful move to distribute Community Safety Funding to localities.

2.4 There was some local concern, however, that the production of a district-level iteration of the Police and Crime Plan risks repeating much of the district Community Safety Plan thud potentially duplicating resources and confusing residents. Work between the Office of the Commissioner and community safety teams will need to be mindful of this.

2.5 No Partnership felt the Commissioner is making it more difficult for them to meet their own priorities. Some suggested that transferring Community Safety Funding to localities might be made easier using a ‘lump sum’ and less bureaucratic reporting process. Furthermore, there is a need to act promptly on issues like the future commissioning framework so potential difficulties are eased – for example, there are concerns that a lack of clarity does not allow partners to put in place proper exit strategies for projects that will not continue, which is particularly risky where services work with vulnerable people.

2.6 More detail is needed on the performance framework for the Police and Crime Plan, and the district-level interpretations that exist. This is particularly important as partners look to allocate resources and design commissioning arrangements.

2.7 The new arrangements have also generated some peripheral issues that the Panel may wish to be aware of:

* How the Commissioner and Community Safety Partnerships balance each other’s new roles and responsibilities when responding to media interest.
* How local projects can provide the Commissioner with evidence of effective interventions, such as work in Kirklees to reduce re-offending.
* The Commissioner’s influence on other Government funding streams, such as his capacity to shape other Government funding like the Pooled Treatment Budget which is managed by Public Health England and used to commission drug treatment services which are crucial in reducing crime and re-offending. The degree of previous ring-fencing has precluded some local areas from tailoring services to meet specific local needs.
* Representation on Health and Wellbeing Boards: Community Safety Partnerships do not have a statutory place on Health and Wellbeing Boards and it is suggested that the Commissioner may wish to bring to bear whatever pressure he can to ensure Boards in West Yorkshire make a place available for a representative from the local Community Safety Partnership.

2.8 In reflecting on the work of the Police and Crime Panel, Community Safety Partnerships recognised that its work on the draft Police and Crime Plan did lead to an improved final version. They are also supportive of the ‘Local Perspectives’ process for raising current issues about the shape of the Plan’s performance framework, for example.

**3. Views from Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees**

3.1 Responses were received from all five district Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees.

3.2 The Committees’ recent work has focused on two aspects:

* Topic-focused inquiries, specifically on support for victims of anti-social behaviour and child exploitation (Wakefield). This has resulted in an agreement with Banardos for a specialist Child Sexual Exploitation worker to directly support victims and train local service providers. A multi-agency Panel, chaired by West Yorkshire Police, supports agencies on specific cases.
* Examination of the effectiveness of Community Safety Partnerships in delivering district-level Crime and Disorder Strategies and the impact of the mutual duty to ‘have regard to’ the Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan (Leeds and Bradford).

3.3 Positive examples of work with the Commissioner include:

* Some Committees have welcomed the positive contribution made by the Commissioner in ensuring his Police and Crime Plan has regard to objectives set out in district-level Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies (and vice versa). Direct engagement with the Commissioner at meetings was particularly welcome and helped the respective plans to relate to each other.
* Other Committees felt it was too early to comment on the impact of the Commissioner.

3.4 Committees highlighted three areas of concern for the Police and Crime Panel to monitor:

* Performance information in the Police and Crime Plan:
  + In scrutinising the Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan, the Leeds Scrutiny Committee recommended that the outstanding information – particularly on the volume of child safeguarding activity undertaken - in the performance measures should be included as soon as possible so that partners and the public of West Yorkshire is able to hold the Commissioner to account.
* Services for victims of anti-social behaviour:
  + A Scrutiny inquiry in Wakefield highlighted that the only support for victims of anti-social behaviour is the Victims’ Champion. Capacity constraints mean only high-risk cases are accepted into the caseload and receive support to cope whilst the anti-social behaviour is tackled. Securing sustainable funding for the service is a challenge, with similar posts across West Yorkshire ceasing to exist.
  + A second finding was that a recent increase in referrals means that low-risk victims do not receive support, though this means their situation could become more serious without intervention.
  + The Bradford Community Safety Partnership is concerned at the resources available to support victims of anti-social behaviour and suggests that the Commissioner works with Victim Support to broaden its remit.
* Funding of community safety projects:
  + Several Committees have voiced concern about the stability and effectiveness of the Commissioner’s Community Safety Fund. The decision to transfer the grant to the district level was universally welcomed. There is, however, a widespread view that the Commissioner’s approach to commission services in 2014/15 should begin immediately so partners have the opportunity to influence and prepare exit strategies from current projects where appropriate. It was also felt that this might overcome some of the practical frustrations of the current arrangements, such as payment in arrears and bureaucratic reporting requirements.

3.5 Although some Committees are still finalising their work programmes for 2013/14, topics of future investigation include:

* Examining the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment services (Bradford);
* Examining the impact of, and agencies’ collective response to, domestic violence (Calderdale).

**4. Implications for the Panel**

4.1 This is the first ‘Local Perspectives’ report presented to the Panel, drawing on the views of Community Safety Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Committees across West Yorkshire. Even at this early stage, some common issues may warrant further discussion with the Commissioner, such as:

* Link between the district-tailored versions Police and Crime Plan
* Performance arrangement (see Item 8)
* Understanding what works
* Timescales and engagement process for developing the commissioning framework for the Commissioner’s community safety funds in 2014/15, and the prospect of making the current process simpler with a lump sum payment.
* Specific queries, such as those issues raised in 2.7 above.

4.2 Crucial to the success of the ‘Local Perspectives’ process is the two-way provision of information. Whilst information will be relayed back to the Partnerships and Committees that have kindly provided information for the Panel, this might be further underpinned by Panel members de-briefing colleagues in constituent areas in order to put in a firmer local context.

**5. Recommendation**

5.1 It is recommended that the Panel notes the common trends and views highlighted in the report. Suggestions for future work may be included in the Panel’s work programme and members may also wish to raise certain issues with the Commissioner.