

Scrutiny Report

**Review of the role, number and allocation of
Police Community Support Officers in Leeds**

**Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger
Communities)**

February 2014



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Introduction

1. At the start of the 2013/14 municipal year, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services was invited to share his views on potential areas of work for the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board to undertake this year. A suggested area was around community safety financial planning for 2014/15 and working with Safer Leeds in determining where future community safety resources need to be targeted, with particular emphasis around Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) resources.
2. In September 2013, the Scrutiny Board was also notified of a request made by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel to have a coordinated review undertaken by the five West Yorkshire Scrutiny Committees on the role, number and targeting of PCSOs in West Yorkshire.
3. Whilst acknowledging that the specific scope and timeline relating to these coordinated reviews was yet to be finalised, and further to the request made by the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, we agreed during our meeting on 11th November 2013 to commence work immediately to review the role, number and allocation of PCSOs in Leeds that may have implications during the 2014/15 financial year. The outcome from this piece of work would then feed into the wider review requested by the Police and Crime Panel.
4. We agreed to undertake this review via working group meetings to which all Board Members would be invited to attend. An initial working group meeting was held on 26th November 2013. At this meeting, the working group discussed proposals aimed at achieving a £150,000 (9.9%) budgetary saving in relation to the Council's Service Level Agreement with the Office of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner for the provision of PCSOs across the city. This meeting was attended by the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services; the Director of Environment and Housing; the Chief Officer Environmental Action; and Chief Inspector Melanie Jones from West Yorkshire Police.
5. A further working group meeting was arranged to provide an opportunity to discuss the proposals with the Leeds Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent Paul Money. This meeting took place on 19th December 2013 and an invitation was also extended to the Council's representatives on the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel.
6. A final working group meeting was held on 22nd January 2014 to discuss the potential response of the Scrutiny Board to the Executive Board in conclusion to this review. This meeting was attended by the Director of Environment and Housing, the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services, the Chief Officer Community Safety, Chief Superintendent Sam Millar, and the Leeds Divisional Commander, Chief Superintendent Paul Money.



Introduction

7. At our meeting on Monday 10th February 2014, we discussed the key findings arising from this review and also the advice of the working group that met on 22nd January 2014.
8. During this meeting, we also received a budgetary update from the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services and the Director of Environment and Housing. It was highlighted that the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has proposed a two year agreement which would see an increase in the PCC's overall contribution towards the cost of PCSOs. Currently the Council funds 30% of the costs of PCSOs and under the current proposals this will reduce to 21% with a proportionate increase in the PCC contribution. As a result, the grant payment to West Yorkshire Police will reduce by £454,000 whilst retaining 165 PCSOs in Leeds. We therefore acknowledged that the budgetary proposals considered as part of this review are no longer relevant.
9. This report therefore sets out our conclusions and recommendations in relation to the allocation and role of Council funded PCSOs.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Proposed allocation models for Council funded PCSOs

10. During this review, we were invited to share opinions and suggestions around alternative allocation models for Council funded PCSOs. Consideration was given to an options paper which presented alternative models that were all based around the principle of having a dedicated flexible resource of PCSOs that would not be allocated to a particular ward area. Instead, this resource would be deployed against demand across the city. In terms of establishing a local PCSO footprint within each ward area, one model proposed an intelligence based approach linked to combined crime and Neighbourhood Policing Team confidence data for all 33 wards across Leeds. Other proposed models were based on the principle that there would be an equal distribution of the remaining PCSO resource across the 33 wards.
11. We agree that the fundamental role of PCSOs is to contribute to the policing of neighbourhoods, primarily through highly visible patrols with the purpose of reassuring the public, tackling anti-social behaviour in public places and being accessible to communities and partner agencies working at local levels.
12. Whilst acknowledging that existing provision is currently based on having 5 PCSOs per ward, it was noted that the shift patterns of PCSOs (i.e. having an early shift, late shift and day off) and the impact of PCSO resources potentially being redirected to support other demand led projects when required, such as Operation Optimal, meant that in reality, there is actually less than 5 PCSOs currently deployed in a ward at any one time.
13. Chief Supt Money reiterated the importance of maintaining a policing footprint within each ward area to enable PCSOs to establish close working relationships with local communities. In acknowledging the need to currently re-direct resources when required, it was highlighted that should the facility to access an appropriate level of dedicated PCSO resource be made available to flexibly deploy against other demands, this would help to secure other PCSOs within their allocated wards. However, it was noted that there are no plans to radically change the shift patterns of PCSOs.
14. In consideration of other alternative allocation models, some concerns were raised that certain wards would potentially have only one PCSO on duty where its allocated baseline is 3 PCSOs, particularly in view of existing shift patterns. There were also concerns that wards that have a larger geographical area, and particularly those with rural and semi-rural locations, would find any reduction in PCSO resource even more challenging to achieve an appropriate level of visible policing.



Conclusions and Recommendations

15. West Yorkshire Police allocate their PCSO cohort across their Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), of which there are currently 17 in total across Leeds. However, reference was made to the development of a new policing operational model that will result in 11 larger NPTs being established. Linked to this will be the identification of more community based hubs within which to base local frontline officers. It was highlighted that this new approach should enable PCSOs to commence and finish their shifts within their allocated communities, thereby reducing unnecessary travelling time and costs often associated with having more centralised bases.
16. As a Scrutiny Board, we fully support the principle of moving towards more locally deployable bases. However, there are differing opinions in relation to the allocation model for Council funded PCSOs. There are members of the Scrutiny Board that support the principle of enabling greater flexibility and targeting resources appropriately to achieve maximum impact. As such, it is their preference to have an allocation model that creates a dedicated flexible resource to deploy against demand whilst establishing a local PCSO footprint within each ward area with an intelligence based approach. It was agreed that such intelligence should incorporate both crime and confidence data for all 33 wards across Leeds to reflect the role of PCSOs in terms of supporting frontline policing, but also providing reassurance to the public.
17. However, there are also members of the Scrutiny Board that support the principle of having an equal distribution of the full resource available across the city and therefore advise that the existing allocation model for Council funded PCSOs is retained, which currently reflects the allocation of 5 PCSOs in every ward in Leeds.
18. As we were unable to reach a consensus in relation to the allocation model for Council funded PCSOs in Leeds, we agreed to reflect both advisory positions in our recommendation to the Executive Board for its consideration.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Executive Board considers the following two advisory positions of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board in relation to the allocation of Council funded PCSOs in Leeds, with position two reflecting the majority view of the Scrutiny Board:

Position one:

That the Executive Board supports the continuation of the existing allocation model for Council funded PCSOs in terms of promoting an equal distribution of the full resource available across the city, which is currently reflected in the allocation of 5 PCSOs in every ward in Leeds.

Position two:

That the Executive Board supports the introduction of a new allocation model during 2014/15 for Council funded PCSOs. This model should involve a dedicated flexible resource of PCSOs to be deployed against demand, with the remaining resource being allocated using an intelligence based approach linked to combined crime and Neighbourhood Policing Team confidence data for wards across Leeds. However, this model should also apply a minimum baseline of 4 PCSOs within each ward.

Enhancing the role of PCSOs to maximise environmental enforcement resources

19. We acknowledge that work has been on-going to develop a clear and effective Fixed Penalty Notice process that better allows PCSOs to contribute to environmental enforcement, particularly around issues such as litter, fly tipping and dog fouling. The Director of Environment and Housing confirmed that there are no income generation targets linked to environmental enforcement action and Chief Supt Money acknowledged that many environmental crimes are already linked to anti-social behaviour, which remains a key priority for Neighbourhood Policing Teams.
20. As such, importance was placed upon continuing to embed a shared understanding and ownership of neighbourhood issues at the frontline, by ensuring that both police and Council staff understand the most effective pathways to deal with environmental crime and other issues related to community confidence so that resources and opportunities for joint working are maximised.



Conclusions and Recommendations

21. Particular reference was made to maximising resources to help tackle noise nuisance across the city. Domestic noise nuisance represents a substantial proportion of complaints received by the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team. Demand for the out of hours service is extremely high, and given the limited resource available to serve the whole of the city, it is not always possible to respond to every complaint with a visit or direct action. Whilst acknowledging that the general shift patterns of PCSOs restricts them to work beyond midnight, it was highlighted that opportunities could be explored to negotiate appropriate shift patterns for a number of PCSOs, linked closely to the principle of creating a dedicated PCSO resource to flexibly deploy against demand.
22. In line with the new policing operational model, it was also highlighted that particular emphasis will be around developing a more integrated partnership approach between police and other partners within neighbourhoods. Linked to the Council's own principles of locality working, importance will be placed on being more locally focussed and responsive to local issues and priorities, with decisions being taken collectively around how best to deploy resources to address a particular problem within a community. However, it was recognised that the success of this approach is heavily reliant on all partners being fully committed towards developing a culture and behaviours that will reflect this new way of working.
23. Whilst we are supportive of the principle to enhance the role of PCSOs to maximise environmental enforcement resources, we are also mindful of the expectations already placed upon PCSOs and so any additional functions will need to be managed effectively. Linked to this, we are particularly supportive of the principle of moving towards more locally deployable bases and developing a more integrated partnership approach between police and other partners within neighbourhoods to enable decisions being taken collectively around how best to deploy resources to address a particular problem within a community.

Recommendation 2

That the Executive Board supports the principle of enhancing the role of PCSOs to maximise environmental enforcement resources and ensures that any additional functions placed upon PCSOs is managed effectively in view of the expectations already placed upon them.



Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendation 3

That the Executive Board supports the principle of moving towards more locally deployable bases and developing a more integrated partnership approach between police and other partners within neighbourhoods to enable decisions being taken collectively around how best to deploy resources to address a particular problem within a community.

24. Finally, we understand that there will be ongoing consultation with the Police and other key stakeholders surrounding the principles for change identified during this review and the practicalities associated with these principles. As a Scrutiny Board we will actively monitor feedback from this consultation with a view to this informing our broader review linked to the request made by the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel to have a coordinated review undertaken by the five West Yorkshire Scrutiny Committees on the role, number and targeting of PCSOs in West Yorkshire.



Evidence

Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to the Executive Board 'Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) Service Level Agreement 2013/14'. 13th March 2013.

Safer Leeds report to the Scrutiny Working Group - Options Paper – PCSO Funding and Allocation (Restricted document).

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board 'Scrutiny review of the role, number and allocation of PCSOs in Leeds'. 10th February 2014.

Witnesses Heard

Councillor Peter Gruen, Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services

Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing

Helen Freeman, Chief Officer Environmental Action

Chief Superintendent Paul Money, Leeds Divisional Commander, West Yorkshire Police

Chief Superintendent Sam Millar, Chief Officer Community Safety

Chief Inspector Melanie Jones, West Yorkshire Police

Councillor Alison Lowe, Chair of the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel

Dates of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – 26th November 2013

Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – 19th December 2013

Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – 22nd January 2014

Scrutiny Board Meeting – 10th February 2014

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