

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 12 July 2018

Report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Police Community Support Officers - Budget Proposals

(Appendices 'A', 'B' and 'C' refer)

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Executive Summary

In the context of increasing budgetary pressures, it was agreed at the meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2018 that the budget option in relation to part funding of Police Community Support Officers be subject to consultation. The consultation has now been completed, with the findings set out in this report. An Equality Analysis has been completed as part of the consultation process and is set out at Appendix 'C'

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order C19 have been complied with.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to consider the findings of the consultation and the associated Equality Analysis in agreeing a budget proposal in relation to funding Police Community Support Officers.

Background and Advice

Lancashire County Council continues to face an unprecedented financial challenge due to funding constraints, increasing costs and rising demand for services provided. Consequently at the meeting of Full Council on 8 February 2018, it was agreed that the budget option (Appendix 'A' refers) in relation to part funding of Police Community Support Officers be subject to consultation.

The county council currently part funds seventeen Lancashire Constabulary Police Community Support Officers, generally employed in Early Action roles across the

county; with two of those posts embedded in the council's Safe and Healthy Travel Team, managed on a day to day basis by officers of the county council, and dealing with issues of crime and disorder on the bus network, especially in relation to travel to and from school.

Early Action and Schools

Fifteen Police Community Support Officers work within early action and schools across the county, jointly funded by Lancashire County Council and Lancashire Constabulary. Originally, the posts were part-funded in areas where young people needed extra support. Since then there has been a move towards an Early Action model, with Police Community Support Officers now supporting both young people and their families.

Early Action teams work with children, young people, adults and families on a wide range of issues including low-level anti-social behaviour/future offending behaviour; knife crime; gang affiliation; availability and use of alcohol/drugs; racism and general low level crime.

Safer Travel

Two Police Community Support Officers work to reduce anti-social behaviour and crime on the bus network across Lancashire (including the unitary authority area of Blackburn with Darwen).

The Police Community Support Officers undertake a range of responsibilities, including investigating reports of anti-social behaviour on the bus network such as bullying, criminal damage, and verbal or physical assaults, both on buses and at bus stations; providing easy access to confidential reporting for victims of bullying and anti-social behaviour; working with school pupils, parents, schools and bus operators to challenge the behaviour of offenders and prevent future incidents; document checks on taxi drivers providing home to school services; working with neighbourhood policing teams to target behaviour, such as missile attacks directed at public transport and taxis.

Consultation

Two electronic consultation questionnaires were developed relevant to the different service areas, available through the county council's website. The fieldwork ran for six weeks from 5 March until 15 April 2018, with a total of 204 completed questionnaires returned online. The consultation asked for views about the proposal to remove the part-funding of the Police Community Support Officers and ceasing their work.

The consultation report has now been completed (Appendix 'B' refers), with the findings presented for consideration by Cabinet.

It should be noted that the findings are not necessarily representative of the views of the population of Lancashire and should only be taken to represent the views of people who, were made aware of the consultation, had the opportunity to respond and felt compelled to.

The consultation responses can be summarised:

Early Action and Schools

- Responding to whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to remove part-funding, 91% of respondents strongly disagreed and no respondents strongly agreed.
- When asked why they agreed or disagreed with the proposal, 43% of those responding to the question said it was an important/vital/invaluable service.
- When asked how removing the part-funding would impact on them the most common responses were that the support provided to young people would be reduced/stopped and would have a negative impact on young people (59%) and there would be a negative impact on other services (e.g. police, Young Addaction, schools' pastoral service).
- Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to say. 50% of the respondents said that it was an important service and 15% said to keep the posts.

Safer Travel

- Responding to whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to remove part-funding, 85% of respondents strongly disagreed and 6% strongly agreed.
- When asked why they disagreed with the proposal, 27% of those responding to the question said Police Community Support Officers provide important support for behaviour management in schools.
- When asked how removing the part-funding would impact on them the most common responses were that there would be a decrease in public/public safety on public transport (24%) and it would be a loss of a valuable external resource for schools and/or bus companies (14%).
- Respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to say and we received 73 varying replies. 23% of respondents said that Police Community Support Officers increased public safety and removing them can only make it worse and 19% said that other services should be cut before the Police Community Support Officers.

Conclusion

The consultation responses highlight the concerns raised should the council withdraw part funding of Police Community Support Officers in Lancashire. There are currently 281 Police Community Support Officers posts (265.72 full time equivalent) in Lancashire Constabulary, of which 50 full time equivalent are part-funded by a mixture of schools, colleges and local authorities. Should the county council withdraw funding it is understood that the Constabulary is likely to consolidate the remaining Police Community Support Officers budget, resulting in the likely retention of nine out of the current seventeen part funded posts. However should the proposal go ahead it is possible that there will be both financial and service pressure implications for the council's Public and Integrated Transport service as there will still be an expectation that the county council will respond to incidents in the absence of a dedicated resource.

The county council will also continue to work strategically with partners to reduce crime and disorder in the county.

An Equality Analysis has been completed as part of this process (Appendix 'C' refers).

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial

The reduction in funding for Police Community Support Officers outlined in this report results in a saving of £265,000 per annum. This has been built into the 2018/19 (£220,000) and 2019/20 budget (£45,000).

It must be noted that there is potential financial risk for the Public and Integrated Transport Service, as identified in the Equality Analysis (Appendix 'C' refers). This will be closely monitored as the reduction in funding for Police Community Support Officers is implemented and if there are additional implications such as increased costs due to the withdrawal of Police Community Support Officers support and/or resulting antisocial behaviour this will be reported back to Cabinet.

Crime and Disorder

The key implications in terms of crime and disorder are identified in the Equality Analysis (Appendix 'C' refers). In particular, low level criminal behaviour may not be addressed at an early stage, resulting in ongoing criminal damage and antisocial behaviour.

Equality and Cohesion

An Equality Analysis has been completed (Appendix 'C' refers).

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A