

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MONDAY 22 MARCH 2004 at 10.00 AM

Agenda Item No.

4

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOs)

Report of the County Secretary

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Executive Member: Iris Tarry

1. Purpose of report

This report is submitted in response to a request for an update on progress in regard to the implementation of the County Council PCSO scheme, made at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee (14 October 2003).

2. Summary

The scheme went live on 22 September 2003, with all the PCSOs successfully recruited, trained and now inducted. Working in specific wards in Dacorum, East Herts and North Herts, the feedback from the community has been extremely positive. Following the funding allocation of an additional £1,250,000, in 2004/05, work is being undertaken, in close liaison with senior officers in the Constabulary, to introduce the second phase of this programme.

3. Conclusion

Having considered the information contained in this report, the Committee will need to decide how further scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken.

Possible scrutiny methods include, in relation to the first phase of the programme:

- questioning officers and Executive Members
- requesting a further report

4. Background

- 4.1** Recorded in the minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, were two specific requests for further information regarding the levels of policing in the areas to which the PCSOs were attached. Members were seeking reassurance that regular officers would not be withdrawn, once the HCC funded PCSOs were in place.
- 4.2** In regard to the ward constables posted to the areas patrolled by the HCC PCSOs, at the time the scheme went live there were 15 ward constables in these areas. By the end of March 2004, this number will have increased by 40% to 21 ward constables.
- 4.3** In regard to the overall levels of policing, it is not possible to identify easily total police strengths covering specific wards, due to changing operational deployments within the police Areas. However, the Constabulary has confirmed that the total police strength as at 1 April 2003, of 1,957, has increased by 135 officers, to a current total strength of 2,092. The target strength of 2,157 is expected to be reached in the first half of 2004/05.
- 4.4** The decision to post the PCSOs in this, the first stage of the programme to wards in Dacorum, East Herts and North Herts was taken by the Cabinet. This was in order to meet the needs of residents in rural areas, where police visibility is felt to be less comprehensive and fear of crime is disproportionately high. Accordingly, the role of the HCC PCSOs in providing local uniform foot patrol and reassurance is seen to complement the provision of existing PCSO schemes, funded by the Constabulary, or other bodies which are operating mainly in urban areas.
- 4.5** Following their training and induction, a performance-monitoring framework has been set up to evaluate the impact of the HCC PCSOs, since they became operational in December 2003. The first performance reports will cover the period to the end of March 2004, evaluating their first four months of service. As reported above, the anecdotal evidence of their impact has been extremely positive.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** As full year operating costs will not be incurred, an underspend in the 2003/04, provision of £475,000 is anticipated. The provision of an extra £1,250,000, in 2004/05, as the next phase of the programme, will fund an additional 40 PCSO posts. Arrangements to recruit and train these extra staff are being progressed with senior officers in the Constabulary, in line with their own commitments.

- 5.2 Further reports will be submitted in due course to the Crime Reduction Member Panel during the second phase of the programme, regarding progress on its implementation.

6. Implications For Access To Services

- 6.1 The first phase of the PCSO scheme has been focused on rural areas only. In regard to the communities in these areas, these officers offer additional points of access to Council services for local people. These will generate calls for service, which will require either action to be taken by the PCSOs themselves, or for onward referral of such service requests, with which they cannot deal, to colleagues in the relevant department(s). Patrol strategies include attending schools and libraries at busy times to maximise the visibility of the PCSOs and to build up networks of contacts. For the same reasons, the PCSOs will also be engaging fully with local voluntary or community organisations. Both may generate additional demands for service, both at County and District level. Key stakeholders, including the Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils, the Constabulary and local councils were consulted in regard to the posting of the first phase of PCSOs within the three districts, once these had been identified.

Background material referred to by the author while compiling this report:

None.