

REPORT FOR: CABINET

Date of Meeting: 8 September 2011

Subject: Council Funding Support for Police Officers

Key Decision: Yes

The decision has the potential to impact on two or more wards and has a contract value in excess of £100,000 revenue per annum.

Responsible Officer: Brendon Hills.
Corporate Director, Community and Environment.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Phillip O'Dell,
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment and Community Safety.

Exempt: No.

Decision subject to Call-in: Yes.

Enclosures: None.

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report seeks approval to enter into a contract with the Metropolitan Police Authority to fund a number of additional Police officers in the Borough at a cost of approximately £156,500 per annum for a period of three years.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Community and Environment to enter into a contractual arrangement with the Metropolitan Police Authority to fund 5 Police Constables for a period of three years, as detailed in this report; and
2. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Community and Environment and the Portfolio Holder, Community Safety, to negotiate and agree annual extensions to this contract at the end of the three year period under the terms of the contract.

Reason: (For recommendation)

1. These recommendations are made in order that the successful arrangement whereby the Council has previously funded Police Officers can be continued, taking advantage of favourable contract terms which are currently available.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1. For a number of years, the Council has funded additional Police Officers in Harrow through a contract arrangement with the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA). The Council has funded 7 Constables, 6 working as a dedicated team in Harrow town centre and 1 working on the prevention of extremism. This arrangement has been made under the provisions of the Police Act 1996.

2.2 Current Situation

- 2.2.1. The previous contracts for the provision of the additional officers have both expired. The contract for the provision of the town centre team expired in March 2010 but funding of the officers continued during 2010-2011 while the longer term position was being discussed

between Council officers and the MPA. The contract for the single “prevent” officer expired in March 2011.

- 2.2.2. Since the previous arrangement was signed there have been significant changes in funding for police and local authorities. Reductions in Government funding, inflation and other pressures mean the Council has to find savings of £62m over the next four years and must consider all options for more efficient and cost effective service delivery.
- 2.2.3. In recent months, the MPA has approached all London Councils seeking support in the funding of Police officers and offering a new contract arrangement whereby officers funded by Councils would be match funded by the MPA, effectively offering a “buy one get one free” arrangement. This proposal is conditional on a number of points, i.e. that this arrangement is for a three year period, that the work of the proposed officers covers new activity, and that previous or immediately expiring arrangements be continued under the terms of these agreements and not on the new footing.
- 2.2.4. In Harrow’s case this has meant that in order to qualify for the new contract terms the Council is required to continue funding one officer under the terms of the previous arrangement.
- 2.2.5. The new proposal will initially be at a cost of approximately £51,000 per Council-funded officer (to be matched by the MPA by a second officer at no cost to the Council). Under previous contract arrangements, officers were provided at a cost of £46,500 per annum.

2.3 Available options

- 2.3.1. As all previous funding arrangements have expired, the Council is under no obligation to fund Police Officers. The Police acknowledge that the provision of policing services is their core function and that, regardless of the funding made available by the Council, their duty to provide a comprehensive policing service to the borough will remain and will be met to the best of their ability.
- 2.3.2. However, the previous arrangements funded a dedicated team which was successful in reducing crime and disorder levels in Harrow town centre. It should also be noted that, in common with the Council, the Police face severe budgetary pressures which have already resulted in reduction to their staffing levels. Finally, as partners, Harrow Council and Police have an almost uniquely effective partnership relationship and track record of jointly funded service delivery.
- 2.3.3. As such, the options available are to either withdraw from funding the additional officers or to determine a level of ongoing funding which appropriately balances operational demands and available resources.

2.4 Proposal

- 2.4.1. In developing the current proposal, discussions were held with senior Police officers in Harrow in order to develop a solution which was able to meet the Police’s and Partnership’s operational needs and also able to offer best value for money. These discussions reflected the

current reshaping of neighbourhood policing in the borough and the changing resource needs arising from this. As such, the proposal submitted to the MPA has the agreement of the local Police.

- 2.4.2. With these considerations in mind, a negotiated proposal has been agreed with the MPA whereby the Council will continue to fund the previous “prevent” officer at a cost of £46,500 per annum and will also fund an additional two officers at an initial cost of £51,000 each per annum with these two officers being matched by two officers provided by the MPA at no cost to the Council. The contract allows for salary cost increases over the life of the contract, as would be expected. This contract will be put in place for the full years of 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14 and, under the terms of the proposed contract, this arrangement can then be extended by mutual agreement.
- 2.4.3. Under this arrangement the provision of a total of 5 Police Constables will cost approximately £148,500 in the 2011-12 year rising to approximately £156,500 in the 2013-14 year. This compares favourably to the costs associated with the previous contracting arrangements, under which 7 officers were provided at a total cost of approximately £278,500 per annum.

2.5 Operational arrangements

- 2.5.1. Given that the MPA has asked that the new contract funds additional activity, officers have submitted a proposal that the Council funding be used for the creation of a small team which can be tasked flexibly to reduce the level of crime in and around the business and retail areas in Harrow. It is proposed that this team provide support principally to the main retail areas in Harrow Town Centre and the Wealdstone Corridor but that, should operational pressures demonstrate a need, the team could be deployed in any of the retail and business areas of the borough of Harrow. Officers have stated that the Council would wish to deploy these additional resources with the following broad objectives:- reducing the overall level of crime; reducing the level of disorder and anti-social behaviour; reducing the level of alcohol-related incidents; and Improving the confidence level among the public and businesses. This proposal has been accepted by the MPA.
- 2.5.2. Practically, the funded team will be managed under the current supervision arrangements whereby a Sergeant is allocated by the Police. The operational tasking of the team will be guided by current intelligence and will be overseen by the existing Joint Area Tasking Co-Ordination Group which included Council officers and the Community Safety Portfolio Holder.

2.6 Conclusion

- 2.6.1. The current funding offer from the MPA allows the Council to continue to support the Police through the provision of a number of additional Police Officers. The new contract arrangement offers improved value for money and allows the Council to retain an influence on operational Police tasking in priority areas.

2.7 Financial Implications

- 2.7.1. The total revenue cost of providing the Police Officers noted is £148,500 in 2011-12, £152,500 in 2012-13 and £156,500 in 2013-14. These costs will be met from within the existing Community Safety budget.
- 2.7.2. In previous years 6 officers were funded from Community Safety budgets. The final officer was funded from the Area Based Grant (ABG) and the budget was devolved to Community Development. The ABG no longer exists and has been removed from the budget so there is no further impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for this service. The 6 Community Safety funded posts were funded from General Fund revenue, and the full year impact of this will be a reduction in the Community Safety budget of £74,000 per annum. This will be reflected in the 2011/12 budget out turn position and MTFS for this service.

2.8 Performance Issues

- 2.8.1. As noted, this proposal is expected to impact positively on the Council priorities of keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe; and supporting our town centre, our local shopping centres and businesses. Specific targets are negotiated between the MPA and Borough Police on an annual basis and performance against these targets is routinely reported through the Safer Harrow Board and, for selected measures, to Cabinet in the Strategic Performance Report..

2.9 Environmental Impact

- 2.9.1. There is no specific environmental impact associated with these proposals. All of the services proposed are already in place and being provided by an external partner. No physical Council resources are to be used in the delivery of these services

2.10 Risk Management Implications

- 2.10.1. The key risk is failure to deliver the agreed level of service by the Police. The most significant risks in this area are non-provision of staff through sickness absence and the contract obliges the Borough Commander to take "all reasonable endeavours" to ensure that this is minimized. The fact that both Safer Harrow and JATCG have senior Council Officer and Member input is viewed as an additional risk management tool.

2.11 Equalities implications

- 2.11.1. The delivery of the service is to be managed operationally by the Police and will be covered by their equalities monitoring arrangements.
- 2.11.2. In addition, an internal assessment has been undertaken which concludes that a full equalities impact is not required. This is because the scale of the project is relatively small in terms of numbers and because it is considered unlikely that individual groups

will be adversely affected by this proposal. Delivery will be handled by the Police and there are well established accountability and monitoring systems in place which cover the impact of the police upon the community, including equalities considerations. Monitoring takes place through the statutory Harrow Police Community Consultative Group (HPCCG) an independent body reporting to the Metropolitan Police Authority which scrutinises police work.

2.12 Corporate Priorities

2.12.1. The provision of Police Officers, as proposed in this report, supports the corporate priorities of: keeping neighbourhoods clean, green and safe; and supporting our town centre, our local shopping centres and businesses. It is expected that the provision of this additional Police resource will contribute to reduced crime and anti-social behaviour, reduced fear of crime and an increased confidence in the Council and Police.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: ...Kanta Hirani	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 17 August 2011		
Name: Stephen Dorrian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: 15 August 2011		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Martin Randall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 15 August 2011		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker



on behalf of the
Divisional Director
(Environmental
Services)

Date: 15 August 2011

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Finlay Flett, Head of Community Safety Services. 020 8736 6230

Background Papers: None.

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]