

APPENDIX TO PAPER NS14/12

NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK COLLABORATION PANEL – 27 FEBRUARY 2014

CONTACT AND CONTROL ROOM – PAPER NS14/3

Introductory Remarks

1. Douglas Paxton

He described the journey so far in terms of collaboration including the level of savings already achieved. The collaboration between Norfolk and Suffolk was seen as one of the best in the country and already almost 1500 staff worked in a shared service environment. This enabled front line policing to be maintained as far as possible

The difficulty the two Constabularies now faced was finding savings of the order of £39m by 2018 following the Government's second Comprehensive Spending Review (Norfolk £23m and Suffolk £16m). Even with the savings from the proposed CCR and SSP projects around a third of the total would still have to be identified and he stressed that the current business model was not sustainable in the longer term.

Dealing firstly with the SSP, he explained the principles in terms of delivering a set of fully collaborated back office services. The case was built on the basis of economies of scale and would be supported by the implementation of a new IT support system known as ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning). While the intention was to establish the SSP in Suffolk more work was required before a location could be agreed. £2.5m savings per annum were predicted and the proposed timeline involved appointment of a head of the service in August this year with the actual Partnership to run from May 2015.

Turning to the CCR, he made the point that the type of service was very different to that in the past given the technology now available. Meetings and workshops with staff had taken place and a range of options had been considered. As with the SSP, CAPITA had supported the Strategic Change Team in developing the business case and had concluded that a single control room was the favoured option.

He explained that the optimum location for a single CCR was at Police HQ, Wymondham given the current facilities there and, importantly, the fact that Norfolk had a fall-back facility. Predicted savings were of the region of £1.8m per annum and the timeline proposed would involve a managed flow during 2015 to be fully operational by the end of that year. He added that the governance model in relation to both projects required further work.

He advised that Simon Bailey and himself recognised the concerns of staff and were sorry to have to present the recommendations. The situation faced in terms of the need to make savings had driven the need for these changes and he gave an assurance that the staff involved would be treated with dignity and respect.

2. Simon Bailey

He thanked Douglas Paxton for his summary of the position and confirmed that he supported the recommendations within the business cases that were summarised in Paper NS14/3. From a Norfolk perspective he made the point that he had to advise staff that fell within the SSP project that the location was to be in Suffolk. The funding gap was such that they were forced to bring these proposals forward and there was still more to do.

3. Stephen Bett

He said that the former Police Authorities had concluded that they could not survive independently and it was inevitable that collaboration was the outcome. This had proved successful but continuing cuts in funding, which tended to impact more on shire counties, had driven the need to bring the current proposals forward.

In themselves they would not meet the funding gap and he was convinced of the need to adopt a regional approach to the provision of services in the future. The situation nationally in terms of debt was such that a change of government would not, in his opinion, change the situation on the savings required.

4. Tim Passmore

He gave an assurance that he would not be making a decision that day on the future of the CCR or indeed the SSP given they were linked. He believed that the business plan required more work before he could be convinced of the arguments. He was anxious to protect the interests of Suffolk and wanted a guarantee there would be no loss of performance.

He wished to acknowledge the fundamental part collaboration with Norfolk had played in delivering savings but remained of the view that collaboration with the public and voluntary sectors had an important part to play. Suffolk was a low cost – high performing Force and his desire was to maintain that position.

He wanted to protect local policing and said that he did not favour a regional approach.

Comments from the Floor.

There were approximately 100 people present, the majority being staff from the CCR. The following is a summary of the points made.

1. Mark Trask (Unison)

Referred to the CCR staff as a 'family' and provided a breakdown including details of a poll of those that stated they could not or would not move the family home (60%) or would not commute (70%). He urged the PCC to find alternative means of making savings and pleaded for him to go to the Home Office and explain the brutal cuts and plead for further funding.

2. Yvonne Cleary (Regional Unison Organiser)

Welcomed the Chairman's announcement that he would not be making a decision on the future of the CCR that day. She hoped that the business case could be made available for scrutiny and pressed for a public consultation exercise. As a Suffolk resident she did not want to see the CCR moved to Wymondham, stressing safety reasons.

Tim Passmore stated that he acknowledged the need for public consultation.

3. David Ellesmere (Ipswich Borough Council Leader)

Highlighted the importance of local knowledge when taking calls and that the experience following the Ambulance Trust merger did not support the case. He had not spoken to anyone who thought a collaborated control room was a good idea and was of the view that the Suffolk PCC should have increased the Council Tax precept to ameliorate the impact of cuts. He asked when a decision was likely to be made.

4. Jane Basham (Parliamentary Candidate)

Was concerned that the impact on rural areas should be properly assessed, highlighting the issue of local knowledge. Was surprised that the PCCs were considering a case without public consultation. Stated that 80% of the CCR staff were female and the impact of this needed careful consideration.

5. Caren Reeves (Norfolk CCR)

Could not sustain continually making cuts and it was time to make representations to the Government. Was concerned that the current focus was on Suffolk to the detriment of Norfolk as there was little more to cut there. She had heard it said that Norfolk was “carrying Suffolk’s debts”.

6. Lisa Brown (Suffolk CCR)

Made further reference to the ‘big family’. They were proud to serve the Suffolk public and the arguments went beyond jobs, not just from a local service point of view but also loss of the family home.

7. Natasha Koncewicz (Suffolk CCR)

The PCCs had to recognise the CCRs were not a call centre. The staff had much wider skills and the Constabularies could not afford to lose the experience. Their knowledge of criminals, victims, hot spots etc led to a specialised service and resolving calls without reference to police officers produced savings that should be taken into account in the business case.

She was concerned that Norfolk and Suffolk staff should have an equal opportunity to apply for posts in a collaborated CCR and nobody should be discriminated against. She asked what Change Management Policy would apply as it was her understanding there were different versions.

8. Phil Quickenden (Suffolk CCR)

Was concerned that he had taken up a position in Suffolk 6 weeks ago having moved from Thames Valley and was now facing a possible redundancy situation which had not been made clear at the time. He wanted assurances that any decisions would be based on a sound business case, which itself was fully tested, including other possible options. He mentioned a member of staff starting on Monday, 24 February and going straight to a briefing with the Chief Constable.

Mrs Quickenden then spoke of her concerns as a mother of two young children feeling they had been unjustly treated. She could not contemplate relocating again and questioned the cost of that.

9. Yvonne Cleary

Made the point that real people were involved with real feelings and making reference in reports and business cases to FTEs was rather dismissive.

10. Tracey Grant (Suffolk CCR)

Again pressed the importance of local knowledge and quoted an example from the Fire Service where the 999 caller was reporting an accident on the Orwell Bridge and was asked for a postcode.

11. Gail Hughes (Suffolk CCR)

She was one of a number of part-time staff and was concerned that they were being hit even harder given moving or commuting were less of an option.

12. Mary Thompson (Unison)

She believed that the Suffolk public expected to be answered by Suffolk staff and indeed many still believed they were ringing the local police station. She pressed a case for keeping Suffolk safe.

13. Maddy O'Neill (Suffolk CCR)

Stressed the special qualities of the staff in dealing with the public who were often very nervous while making an emergency call. Also, quoted villages with the same name in both counties where local knowledge was so important to avoid delays.

14. Sarah Manning (Suffolk CCR)

She provided a further example of a critical incident involving two villages with the same name; it related to the Ambulance Service.

15. Gavin King (Suffolk CCR)

He questioned why funding was made available to support the introduction of the new STORM Command & Control system if there was no intention to retain the Suffolk CCR.

16. Tracey Tansley (Unison)

She was surprised at Tim Passmore's opening comments, given Paper NS14/3 referred to the existence of a business case and recommendations based on that business case.

Tim Passmore said that he remained to be satisfied with the robustness of the business case. He wanted more detail.

17. Mark Trask

He said that the record in dealing with staff put at risk had been very good to date. He quoted a figure of 225 in Suffolk that had resulted in 38 redundancies – only 13 of those 38 had been enforced redundancies. However, he was concerned that the move of the CCR would introduce a new dimension given it was a 24-7 service and staff were used to receiving a 34% enhancement. Moving staff to a similar grade job would result in a major reduction in income.

Tim Passmore thanked staff and the public for attending and making their views known. He gave an assurance that he would seek to bring the discussions on the future of the CCR to a conclusion as soon as possible, to avoid continuing uncertainty.