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Community Way
Croxley Green
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire WD3 3SU

Full Council Meeting – 25 July 2019

Agenda Item CC2021/19

Continuing Parish Council Funding of PCSOs

Introduction

At the F&A meeting on 11th April 2019 the Parish Council agreed to continue to contribute towards funding two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) at an increased cost of £29,500 for the year 2019/20.

However concerns have been expressed that Hertfordshire Constabulary (Herts Police) is not providing the two PCSOs as agreed in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and it has been suggested that the Council should ask Herts Police for a partial refund of the contribution for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Also there have been questions about whether continuing to support funding of PCSOs in Croxley Green is the best use of council taxpayers' money raised through the Parish Council precept.

This paper summarises the issues for discussion and decision.

Discussion

A Police Community Support Officer, a role created in 2002, is a uniformed post, non warranted, but with a wide community-based (as the name suggests) role.

According to the Police.UK website for the Rickmansworth and District policing neighbourhood, currently there are one sergeant, three constables and eight named PCSOs, in the district although some of those named have moved on and others are being trained.

The main purpose of a PCSO, as part of the Neighbourhood policing team, is to be a visible foot patrolling representative of law and order, providing public reassurance, supporting crime prevention, crime reduction and community engagement activities in Croxley Green, focusing on lower level crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

The Parish Council has part funded two PCSO posts for the past 13 years. The original arrangement was that the Parish Council would pay the cost of one and Hertfordshire Constabulary would fund the cost of another, and both would be deployed to cover the Parish of Croxley Green.

The annual amount (£29,550) contributed by the Parish Council through our precept amounts to about £5.40 per property in Croxley Green. We are informed by Herts Police that this is less than the actual cost of a PCSO.

For many years PCSO Steve Jacob has been a visible presence in the village supported by other PCSOs. However the Neighbourhood policing team has been under strength for a number of months and we are advised that operational requirements have meant that there has been less presence in Croxley Green. In addition PCSO Jacob has duties that take him

out of Croxley Green (he is Lead Rural Officer) so it may be surmised that there have been periods when no PCSOs have been working in the village.

We are aware that until recently PCSO Jacob has not been supported by a designated PCSO for at least six months, although we are advised that a permanent placement will be made by 1 August.

The questions to consider are:

1. Whether the Parish Council should seek to recover some of the contribution since April 2018 to reflect the unavailability of PCSOs to deliver the agreed service?
2. Whether the Parish Council wishes to continue to support towards funding two PCSOs for service in Croxley Green (in the longer term) and, if so, whether there are any specific requirements that we wish to include in future Service level Agreements (from March 2020 onwards)?

Recommendations

1. The Council resolves to continue to provide support towards funding two PCSOs for service in Croxley Green.
2. The Council instructs the Clerk to recover sums paid to Herts Police for a service that was not, in fact, delivered under the terms of the existing SLA.
3. If recommendation 2 is adopted, to instruct the Clerk to negotiate, at his discretion, the terms on which the funding support is continued, including but not limited to regular reporting of PCSO activity in the village, a commitment from Herts Police to assign substitute PCSOs in the event the designated PCSOs are not available, arrangements for early rebates in the claim if staffing is not maintained at the agreed level, and committing to having PCSO attendance at specific village events (e.g. Revels, CroxFest, New Years Eve fireworks).
4. If recommendation 2 is not adopted, to instruct the Clerk to give notice to Herts Police to terminate the contract.

Councillors Derek Wallington & Nigel Cole
June 2019