Appendix 1

Scrutiny Management Board Briefing from Chair of Cumbria Police and Crime Panel

1.0 Purpose of Update

1.1 This report updates Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) on the work of the Cumbria Police and Crime Panel and any issues and developments that have occurred since the last meeting of SMB.

2.0 Board Meeting Update

2.1 The Police and Cumbria Panel last met on 25th March 2019. The Panel reviewed several areas of the Police and Crime Plan including tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and blue light collaboration.

2.2 The Panel received updates on the impact of the 25 additional police officers which were agreed as part of the increase in the Council Tax Precept for policing. Assurance was provided that these officers would increase the police presence that was visible to the public and would be part of the renewed approach to tackling antisocial behaviour. There would be a focus on anti-social behaviour ‘hot spots’ around the county where officers were working closely with communities to target those areas.

2.3 The Panel had a detailed discussion regarding the 101 service which is the secondary non-emergency number for the Force. Members were informed that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to improve the service with extra officers and new packages of training introduced. This would provide the public with better access to the service and continue to reduce waiting times to speak to an officer. These changes were part of an £8m investment on a significantly upgraded new control system for the police service made over the next 10 years.

2.4 Members received an update from the Commissioner on tackling domestic abuse. Two programmes have been recommissioned to cover 2017-19 to provide an integrated approach to stopping abuse by working with the perpetrator, as well as the victims. The Turning the Spotlight family programme provides a holistic service for families. The ‘Step Up’ programme is a commissioned service for families experiencing youth violence and abuse towards family members in the home.

2.5 The Panel welcomed news that the Commissioner had also continued to fund the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor service, alongside the County Council, which provided risk assessments, support and safety planning.
2.6 In relation to Blue Light Collaboration Members were informed that collaboration was taking place between the Fire and Police services with regards to joint working around forced entry into properties. Estates were also being investigated with a view to the sharing of premises and the possibility of a joint command control centre situated within the county.

2.7 The Panel sought assurances as to the reasons for the increase in Violence Against the Person and Sexual Offences. The Panel were informed the increase was partly due to improved reporting and changes in the definition of what constituted a crime but that it remained a priority for the force. Members of the Panel welcomed the assurance from the Commissioner that the public now had more confidence in coming forward to report crimes and that as a result there were more incidents which were now being recorded as a crime and dealt with.

3.0 Additional Scrutiny activity undertaken by the Board

3.1 The next full Panel meeting in July will present the first Annual Report to be produced by the Police and Crime Panel. This will summarise the work over the past year undertaken by Panel and look forward to the challenges ahead. The Panel will also receive the Commissioner’s Annual Report as well as budget updates from both the Commissioner’s Office and Constabulary. The meeting will seek assurances from the Police and Crime Commissioner that the most pertinent current crime matters are being addressed by the Police Force. This is likely to focus on serious and organised crime rates and in particular the response to the increasing threat post by county lines drugs gangs.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 The Panel continues to develop a strong working relationship with the Commissioner and is keen to explore joint areas of interest with the Commissioner over the coming year to develop the Panel’s work programme.

Chair: Cllr William McEwan

Vice Chair: Cllr Helen Fearon