

# **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR LEICESTERSHIRE**

## **ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE**

PAPER MARKED

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Report of	<b>CHIEF CONSTABLE</b>
Subject	<b>ETHICAL DILEMMA</b>
Date	<b>FRIDAY 15 DECEMBER – 2:00 p.m.</b>
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### **Purpose of Report**

1. Policing nationally is facing unprecedented changes in funding, increasing demand and new and emerging crimes that are putting significant pressure on resources. Policing, like all public sector services, is funded on a fixed budget basis that changes year on year but takes no real consideration of demand. As such police forces have to work with the resources they have budget for and to attempt to juggle priorities and meet the demands they face with fixed resources. Nationally 41 of the 43 forces have reduced officer numbers. This is now becoming significantly difficult to do and the force needs to consider what services it should prioritise, what it should stop doing and what it can alter its service levels on to try and cope with the priorities.
2. This paper presents a number of ethical questions to the Ethics Committee seeking guidance on making changes that are ethically sound based on the difficult financial circumstances the force faces.
3. It is important to emphasise that the ethical questions and suggestions posed later in this paper merely reflect discussions taking place within the Police Service and beyond. Their presence within this paper should in no way be viewed as an intention or pre-determined decision to progress in this way at this time.

### **Recommendation**

4. To consider the ethical questions posed and to discuss and provide guidance to the force on potential changes that can be ethically made to services.

### **Background**

5. Leicestershire Police has already saved over £37 million from mainly non people costs since austerity began in 2010. There is now a further funding gap to be bridged of £12 million by 2021/22. 83%+ of budgets are spent on people. Non people based budgets are <17% (£26-27 million) and many of these budgets pay for non-adjustable or time based contracts/services such as pensions, insurances, estate costs and IT systems. Savings from non-people based budgets look very difficult to achieve. This will mean that the majority of the savings required are likely to come from a reduction in the people budgets and a reduction in police officers and police staff. In October 2017 the OPCC agreed to allow the force to use £4.6 million of reserves to maintain police officer numbers at current

levels of 1782 FTE until April 2019. **Appendix A** shows the budget situation for Leicestershire Police.

6. Demand is also increasing. Both locally and nationally we have seen increases in reported crime (nationally estimated at 13%), increases in historic crime related to sexual offences and child sexual exploitation, new and emerging crimes like online fraud and increases in violent crimes (knife crime) and an increase in murders and reported rapes and other sexual offences.
7. Partner agencies are also facing significant budget cuts, in many cases more severe than those in policing. The City Council is expecting to have only 33-35% of the budget it had in 2010 by 2022. To date the cuts have impacted most significantly on non-people based services (highways, arts, maintenance, libraries, parks etc) but the remaining cuts to services are most likely to impact significantly on adult and children's services. This will leave significant gaps in safeguarding which will impact on policing as the last emergency service.
8. The over-arching impact of the reduction in police resources, increasing demands and reduced partner service offer means that the force may well have to reduce or significantly alter its service offer. Nationally this has already began to take place with forces not attending low level, high volume crimes such as bilkings and shoplifting below a fixed amount (£50-100). Leicestershire Police will probably now need to follow this reduction in service offer to cope with the impact of current budget situation which was highlighted at a recent national conference held by demand based consultants Process Evolution who work with over half the UK Police Forces. Process Evolution summarised the state of British Policing as...
  - 5-10% increase in total demand over the last 2 years.
  - Reported increase in volume crime of 13%.
  - Increasing levels of complexity i.e. time at scene increased by 10-15% in last 5 years.
  - Reducing workforce: 41 of 44 forces (incl BTP) are reducing officer numbers (Durham highest reduction, Met least).
  - Drop in performance against standards overall.
  - More single crewing in all forces.
  - Officer utilisation levels significantly increasing (work life balance, overtime up, ability to take leave reducing, increasing stress, increasing mental health issues and sickness levels up)
  - Neighbourhood policing generally made up of what's left rather than what's needed.
9. The following questions are those for which the force would like to test the ethical right to make changes and advice is sought from the Ethics Committee to do so.
10. **Not attending.** Is it ethically acceptable to not attend low risk, low harm, high volume crimes that are unlikely to lead to any form of positive judicial outcome?
11. **Alternative action.** Is it ethical to maximise the full use of alternative outcomes such as out of court disposals in all circumstances when arrest and temporary detention is unlikely to achieve any form of judicial action?
12. **Charging.** Is it ethically acceptable to charge businesses/households/parishes for services above or beyond what the force can afford to offer to all? Examples are crime prevention advice and policing public events.
13. **Safeguarding.** Is it ethically acceptable for the police to reduce its role in safeguarding some vulnerable people based on other partners reducing their roles in the safeguarding arena?
14. **Non-emergency calls.** Is it ethically acceptable for the force to only offer a phone service for non-emergency calls from 8am to 10pm providing that an online reporting process is in place for out of hours reporting?

15. **Focusing on crime.** Is it ethically acceptable that the force should focus its services primarily on crime rather than safeguarding (accepting that safeguarding should be a fully partnership based service provided by multi agency groups)?
16. **Welfare checks.** Is it ethically acceptable to refuse to do welfare checks when another agency may be responsible for the overall wellbeing of the person?
17. **Breach of the peace.** Is it ethically acceptable to refuse to attend potential breach of the peace requests when a family member could assist in supporting?
18. **Social media.** Is it ethically acceptable to not investigate harassment on social media when advising victims to delete or block access to accounts may suffice as suitable means to prevent occurrences?
19. **Low value offences and civil matters.** Is it ethically acceptable to not investigate low value crimes such as shoplifting offences relating to low value goods and alleged matters which may be civil rather than criminal (when claims of criminal damage could be below £100)?
20. **EMAS escorts.** The police are often asked to attend with EMAS crews to potentially volatile situations. Often there appears to be little or no reason for the police attendance. Is it ethically acceptable to not escort EMAS based on revised criteria for risk based on Police assessments and rules?
21. **Missing from home.** Is it ethically acceptable to reduce our service offer to children's homes and other institutions when the children's home could and probably should take more responsibility for their children in care?
22. **Mental Health Act.** On 11 December 2017 the MHA changes and detainees will need to go to a non-police place of safety. This may require officers to transport and await the receiving organisation to accept the detainee. Is it ethically acceptable to make this process as quick as possible and of minimal bureaucracy to ensure officers can return to patrol duties quickly?

### **Implications**

Financial :	There are no financial implications associated specifically with this report. Ongoing decisions may have further implications at a later date
Legal :	None.
Equality Impact Assessment :	None.
Risks and Impact :	Not applicable to this report. However, if some actions are followed through separate risk assessments will need to be undertaken.
Link to Police and Crime Plan :	Not applicable to this report. However, any changes made from discussions would need to reflect the aims and objectives of the P&CP.
Communications :	None.

## List of Appendices

Appendix A –

## Background Papers

None.

## Person to Contact

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## Appendix A

