



Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Rooms, East Pallant House on Tuesday 16 January 2024 at 2.00 pm

Members Present: Mrs D Johnson (Chairman), Ms B Burkhart (Vice-Chairman), Mr J Brookes-Harmer, Mr C Hastain, Ms E Newbery, Mr H Potter, Ms S Quail and Mr J Vivian

Members not present: Ms O Hickson, Mrs S Sharp and Mr C Todhunter

In attendance by invitation:

Officers present: Mrs H Belenger (Divisional Manager for Financial Services) and Mr A Buckley (Corporate Improvement and Facilities Manager)

10 **Chairman's Announcements**

Apologies were received from Cllr Todhunter, Cllr Hickson and Cllr Sharp.

11 **Minutes**

With regards to the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 September 2023, the end time was noted incorrectly as 2:12.

During the following meeting on 16 January 2024, when the minutes were considered, it was noted that the correct end time was 4:12.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 September 2023 (as amended).

12 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

13 **Declarations of Interests**

Cllr Vivian declared his interest as a member of the City Council and as the City Council's Designated Observer to the BID board.

Cllr Quail declared her interest as a member of the City Council.

14 **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

15 **PCC Katy Bourne - Member Q&A**

The Chair welcomed the guest speakers, PCC Katy Bourne and Chief Inspector Keating-Jones and invited Members to ask their submitted questions.

Police Resourcing

Cllr Vivian: *The Chichester BID has deployed Ambassadors to patrol Chichester City centre, however these Ambassadors will lack any enforcement capability. But it's come to our attention that Sussex Police have been asking the BID to roll out the scheme as early as they possibly can, presumably to plug the gaps in PCSO capacity. How is it that Sussex Police are increasingly leaning on third-sector organisations to keep the public safe?*

PCC Bourne thanked the Committee for being invited and welcomed the opportunity to answer queries. Members could also direct additional questions through the Police & Crime Panel.

With regards to the Chichester BID, PCC Bourne stated that third sector organisations have always played a significant role in the West Sussex Police. Many of the organisations have a high volume of volunteers, including within her own office. PCC Bourne runs the Independent Custody Visitors Scheme, a team dedicated to supervising detainee welfare. This scheme has been recognised as platinum status nationally and comprises mostly of volunteers.

Other examples include the Sussex 4x4 Rescue Team, the Search & Rescue Team and the Beachy Head Chaplaincy. PCC Bourne stated that it is therefore not unusual for third sector organisations and volunteers to help keep the public safe. The Chichester BID ambassadors play an important role in achieving this.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones added that the BID scheme is being introduced at a reasonable pace and does not recognise that this is being used to plug gaps in PCSO capacity. It's important that the police work collaboratively with other organisations, but that they are not reliant upon other organisations, as the police are ultimately the leading agency in keeping the public safe. This approach leads to better work in the community.

Cllr Vivian: *Could the Police & Crime Commissioner give an update on the current recruitment strategy for PCSOs in and around Chichester, and whether there are any issues surrounding recruitment?*

PCC Bourne advised that she has recently reviewed the recruitment strategy for PCSOs with the Chief Constable of Sussex Police, as this has been a challenge all police forces are experiencing.

The establishment of PCSOs currently has a target of 292 PCSOs across the entire county. Whilst some police forces are no longer using PCSOs, PCC Bourne advised that she will always retain them as staff whilst she is Police & Crime Commissioner. The Chief Constable agrees that PCSOs play an important role in local policing.

PCC Bourne added that a new cohort has been planned and that recruitment is currently underway. There are open positions, with the cohort currently being 40 positions under target. It's not uncommon for PCSOs to transfer departments and become police officers, given their experience and training. This can however impact how many PCSOs are available.

PCC Bourne stated that the Chief Constable is focused on filling these positions to reach the target of 292 by the end of March 2024. The Sussex Police have also recently used a recruitment agency for the first time. This has not been very effective however, with only five applications received.

The recruitment process was repeated across Sussex, and whilst this did result in more applications, only two of these applications were eligible to proceed to the next stage of recruitment. This demonstrates the difficulty in finding suitable candidates across the South-East Region. The recruitment manager for Sussex Police regularly contacts the National Lead in Policing for PCSOs to improve recruitment activity. PCC Bourne confirmed that whilst she is Police & Crime Commissioner, PCSOs will remain in use in Sussex.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones advised Members that there are currently 17 PCSOs responsible for the inner and outer regions of Chichester. These PCSOs are seated within a Neighbourhood Policing Team, which is managed by Inspector Damien Merrifield. Sergeant Ibu Fal & Sergeant Paul Coles report to the Inspector, with 4 Police Constables that support the PCSO team.

With regards to vacancies, the full establishment target should be 22 and there are currently 5 open positions. Chief Inspector Keating-Jones was pleased with the recent introduction of a new cohort, which includes 6 trainee PCSOs who are currently shadowing PCSOs as part of their training. If these members pass the necessary training and checks, they will be ready to deploy in mid-February 2024. The PCSOs that are allocated to Chichester will help improve the police presence in the local community.

Cllr Vivian praised the officers for their accountability in reviewing their strategies and asked the officers what more could be done to promote policing as a career option for young people, as it is a varied, interesting vocation.

PCC Bourne advised that one of the challenges with recruiting PCSOs is that it's not a role that has natural progression. It's important to clarify that Sussex Police are not experiencing issues with recruiting police officers, but PCSOs specifically.

PCC Bourne added that Sussex Police have exceeded the government targets for recruitment and are in a strong position. Since 2018, an extra 250 police officers have been recruited, using funds from increases in Council tax.

With regards to interest amongst young people, PCC Bourne advised that there is a strong level of interest. The recruitment department makes regular contact with local universities, recruitment fairs and receives positive feedback from young applicants.

Cllr Brookes-Harmer (on behalf of Cllr Hickson): *Can you give us information on the workforce in Sussex Police, what is the average length of service of Sussex Police? How are you working to retain police expertise and prevent officers from joining other forces including the Met? Are there any trends that we should be noting?*

PCC Bourne stated that there will be 3,163 officers deployed by the end of the 2023-2024 tax year, an increase from when she started in the position in 2012. One important piece of feedback received from the public is that they wanted more visibility and presence from police officers. PCC Bourne advised that it's been rewarding to help deliver this, despite not receiving as much funding from the Government as other forces and having a lower Council tax preset.

In relation to the Met, PCC Bourne advised that she found their recruitment tactics to be disingenuous, specifically in offering £5,000 'golden handshakes' to Officers in Sussex to join the Met. PCC Bourne stated that this is not how policing should be conducted.

There is a low number of staff members that join the Met from the Sussex Police, however there are more members joining the Sussex Police from the Met. The Chief Constable has introduced routes of entry whereby applicants no longer require a degree, which has provided more entry points into the profession.

Unauthorised Encampments

Cllr Newbery: *Please can you help us understand the police's role in traveller incursions generally, particularly in Camelsdale Rec this summer?*

Please can you advise us (both as Councillors and Parish Councillors) as to what steps should be taken if travellers set up on a park or playground that is needed for use by the rest of the community? Are there any top tips to be able to involve the police or encourage them to move on?

PCC Bourne recalled that in the Summer of 2013, there were 52 incursions in Chichester District Council, which was unprecedented at the time. In contrast, Mid Sussex District Council had low levels of incursions, with only 6 incursions in the east of the district, across the same period.

Upon reviewing the strategy adopted by Mid Sussex District Council, it was apparent that a transit site was required, resulting in the construction of the Westhampnett Transit Site. This made a significant impact in the local response.

PCC Bourne advised Members of recent changes in legislation that impact police response. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced new powers and made amendments to existing legislation. These changes were made in order to improve multi-agency response.

PCC Bourne detailed the new s60C and s61 powers and the conditions that need to be met for Police to use them, noting that the use of the term 'significant' in the legislation still allows for subjective interpretation. PCC Bourne confirmed that in light of the recent changes, trespass continues to be a civil matter. Staff and police officers have been briefed on the new legislation and its implications. The guidance received by the National Police Chiefs' Council from the Home Office states that unauthorised encampments require a locally driven multi-agency response, and therefore should be led by the local authorities and supported by the Police.

The Sussex Police continue to work closely with the travelling community, particularly Gypsy Roma groups, so that they can provide a proportionate and balanced response.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones outlined the timeline of events during the Camelsdale Rec incursion, advising that the travellers arrived on 17 June 2023, authorisation of use of police powers was subsequently granted on 19 June 2023. The group had then left the area under notice on 20 June 2023.

From a legal and police procedural perspective, Chief Inspector Keating-Jones believed this to be a reasonable and proportionate response and that the situation was resolved in a reasonable period of time. There are several checks and procedures that must be followed to ensure that the police response is legally compliant, especially as travellers are a protected group under The Equalities Act 2010. This includes allowing time for Council staff to check the welfare of those present and to assist vulnerable individuals.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones highlighted that a contingency plan should also always be in place, which can become more complex when dealing with aggressive or larger groups. Chief Inspector Keating-Jones added that whilst the majority of incursions are dealt with amicably, he understands the impact this can have on the local community.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones advised that the police will work with Council to prepare for potential incursions during the summer period, with briefings taking place from February 2024.

Mrs Bushby agreed that the Lynchmere and Camelsdale Rec incursions were resolved quickly and confirmed that there is a multi-agency protocol in place for unauthorised encampments, which works closely alongside the police. Preparations have begun for the upcoming summer, with sites being inspected and deterrents being set up. The Officers agreed that communication is key to plan a strong response.

Cllr Quail: *Why didn't any police officers investigate when we reported the incursion of travellers in Chichester West - on Parklands to be exact - in the summer?*

Residents of Parklands were extremely distressed, particularly when the travellers moved from the green to the top of Sherborne Road and intimidated residents in the old folks bungalows.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones outlined the events described in the crime report and advised that the police initially attended Parklands on 6 July 2023. The police then revisited the site on 7 July 2023 and a notice was served 8 July 2023. The group had left by the 9 July 2023.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones confirmed that the police did receive a crime report and multiple calls regarding antisocial behaviour and noise discrepancies. However, a three-day turnaround on an incursion is a strong police response.

PCC Bourne highlighted the importance of communication and advised that to prepare for future incursions in the same area, the Council and Police could work together to designate an area in Sherbourne road. This could reduce the impact of future incursions. With feedback from the previous incursion, communications can be implemented to ensure that residents are supported and safe.

Cllr Quail agreed that planning and communication are key but was concerned with the lack of communication and police presence at the time.

PCC Bourne stated that it is also the Council's responsibility to ensure that there are communications in place to support the local community.

Mrs Bushby confirmed that communications were in place and that Officers within the Council were communicating to resolve the issue, but that residents in the local area felt that there was a lack of police presence.

Cllr Burkhart noted that whilst, from a police perspective, a 3 day turnaround is a strong response, local residents could find this period of time to be significant, as residents are not usually aware of how long the incursion could last and the extent of damage done.

Cllr Burkhart asked the Officers what improvements could be made to resolve incursions faster, as this would result in less damage being done to the local community.

PCC Bourne advised that dealing with incursions is one of the most challenging and complex areas for the police to navigate, given the legislation and the checks that must be complied with. With these factors in mind, 3 days is a proactive response. PCC Bourne re-iterated the importance of communication in ensuring that incursions are resolved swiftly.

Cllr Potter raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour.

The Chair advised Cllr Potter to discuss this with PCC Bourne directly.

Road Safety and Anti-social driving

Cllr Brookes-Harmer (on behalf of Cllr Hickson): *My family has had recent experience of a tragedy caused by drug driving.*

Can you give us the statistics for this offence in Sussex and breakdown the reasons for apprehension, and conviction?

Are there any trends emerging from this data? What measures are the offices of the PCC and Sussex Police doing to educate drivers and to make drug driving as socially unacceptable as drink driving?

PCC Bourne gave her regards to Cllr Hickson and briefed Members on the most recent statistics collected. Over 1,000 people are killed or seriously injured on roads in Sussex every year, which has stayed consistent for 12 years. PCC Bourne has asked the Road Partnership to review their processes for improvements.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones confirmed that there were 78 arrests in Chichester related to drink driving in 2023, 43 were disposed of by way of charge or summons and 1 was disposed of by way of postal requisition.

In relation to drug driving, there have been 35 arrests, 4 of these were disposed of by way of charge or summons and 11 were disposed of by way of postal requisition.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones advised that there are no immediate trends emerging from this data. Drug driving detection techniques and tests are improving and officers have received training on what indicators to look out for. Where there's any uncertainty, individuals can be arrested under suspicion of drug driving and can receive blood tests at the police station.

Intelligence from the community and partners can also lead to arrests. The police have set up initiatives to address drug driving specifically, such as Operation Limit.

Cllr Brookes-Harmer asked the officers how improvements in technology have improved police services, and what impact could this have on issuing future convictions.

PCC Bourne advised that drug wipes have been incredibly useful. The police can test for several drugs roadside and can test for a further 17 types in custody.

Cllr Vivian: *In my ward, antisocial driving and boy racers are a frequent occurrence, but the Police & Crime Plan only mentions the issue once. How is Sussex Police addressing the issue, and how can the District Council and its Parishes assist in its prevention?*

PCC Bourne advised that as the Police & Crime Plan is a strategic document, it only provides a general overview and does not include specifics on this issue.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones stated that information and reports from the local community continue to play an important role in helping the police deal with road safety. Members of the public should continue to report to the police through the various forums available. Information received can help inform police strategy and lead to more targeted responses.

Additionally, there are several initiatives in place to address and improve road safety specifically, such as Operation Downsway and the Roads Policing Unit.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones added that if there are any hotspots that Members would like the police to focus on, they can review and investigate these areas.

Mrs Bushby confirmed that there is a response in place for anti-social driving, which works alongside other agencies and the local community. One recent example is the Car Park at Minerva Heights, which had several reports of dangerous driving. After meeting with officers and residents, the developer implemented several changes to reduce the impact of the anti-social driving.

The Arun & Chichester Road Safety Action Group, which Mrs Bushby chairs, regularly reviews data regarding road safety. The key areas of concern are speeding and occupational drivers. The Council is working with Safer Roads Sussex Partnership to raise awareness and to improve road safety.

Cllr Quail (on behalf of Cllr Todhunter): *What is being done to improve road safety in our rural communities? As coordinator of a Community Speedwatch group, I see the dangerous speeds that traffic flies through our villages first hand, but the team to supports us seems woefully under-resourced and under-budgeted.*

PCC Bourne stated that there are 300 speed groups in Sussex, which is more than any other police force in the country. PCC Bourne appreciates Cllr Todhunter's concern regarding the Community Speedwatch Group and accepts that historically, this team required more support. However, PCC Bourne does not accept that the team is under-budgeted, as she has received an undertaking from the Safer Roads Sussex Partnership that they will be supporting Community Speedwatch Groups across the county.

Cllr Quail asked the officers whether the fact that there's 300 speed groups indicates that there's a high volume of speeding in West Sussex.

PCC Bourne clarified that there are 300 speed groups across the whole county, not just in West Sussex. PCC Bourne added that there are 1.7 million residents in Sussex, across 12 district and borough councils and 400 parish and town councils.

Following their training with the police, these speed groups are set up in different areas at different points of the day to report any dangerous driving. Any individuals who drive dangerously are sent correspondence to warn them. PCC Bourne advised that approximately 70% of these individuals refrain from further dangerous driving after receiving their first warning.

Rural Crime

Cllr Brookes-Harmer (on behalf of Cllr Hickson): *In my community Southbourne on the edge of Chichester District, the population are unimpressed with the police response to crimes that seem to be seen as "low priority". This includes break ins to outbuildings, theft of equipment, bikes, garden tools etc, the response to antisocial driving and boy racing, and shoplifting in local shops, to name but a few issues.*

There is a perception that the police are just not interested in community policing any more, and that rural and semi-rural communities are on their own.

What is the office of the PCC and Sussex Police response to this? How are you proposing to change this perception in our communities?

PCC Bourne advised that she understands the misconception that crimes like theft aren't as important to the police as more severe offences. It can be difficult for the police to balance local priorities with more serious offences, however this is an area of high importance and something the police are working on improving.

One example of addressing this is formation of a Rural Crime Team, which was introduced in 2021. The team comprises of 18 members and works alongside local farms and businesses to ensure that they are supported. PCC Bourne advises that she regularly receives positive feedback from residents regarding this team.

PCC Bourne highlighted the importance of technology and advised Members on how this has improved the Rural Crime Team's functions. The team has access to long range thermal images, coloured night vision, portable microscopes and many more tools which have improved the standard of work delivered by the team.

Furthermore, the team have also introduced a rural partnership platform via app called DISC. This platform supports the country watch schemes and allows the sharing of information by DISC members with the police. This platform has received positive feedback and plays an important role in re-building trust between the police and rural community.

Cllr Quail (on behalf of Cllr Todhunter): *What is being done to address rural crime and lack of police presence in our rural communities? We border Surrey in the Northeast of the district and I have never seen the police in our community. As a result, we are targeted by opportunistic crime such as vehicle and catalytic converter thefts.*

PCC Bourne advised that the Rural Crime Team has also helped in this regard, as they possess specialist knowledge of legislation that covers crime in this area of the district. The team has single points of contact and operate of out bases in Heathfield and Midhurst. PCC Bourne confirmed that the team has received strong feedback from farming organisations, such as the National Farmers Union and The Country Landowners Association. Additionally, the neighbourhood policing teams work in cohesion with local PCSOs to support rural areas.

PCC Bourne outlined some of the large-scale operations conducted by the Rural Crime Team, including intelligence reports, stop and searches and recovery of stolen property. The data from these operational activities is recorded under Operation Tracker. This allows police to record and analyse how much of a particular type of crime is taking place in a certain area.

Cllr Quail highlighted communication as an area of improvement and asked whether it would be possible for PCC Bourne to work with Cllr Todhunter and the relevant parishes to address concerns in this area of the district.

PCC Bourne advised that she is happy to meet Councillors to discuss any areas of concern and listed her contact details for Cllr Todhunter and others to contact her directly.

General Enquiries

Cllr Newbery: *We are curious generally about rates of crime in the Fernhurst Ward and trends in crime here, you've already touched on what's being done to tackle this, could you give a profile of the area?*

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones stated that there are difficulties retrieving crime data from the Fernhurst Ward, and whilst it is possible to retrieve this, he would like an analyst from headquarters to compile and review the rates. This information can then be provided to Cllr Newbery.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones advised that, generally, there are low rates of crime in the Chichester District. With regards to Fernhurst in particular, there have been instances of break ins and burglaries.

As first point of contact, there is a named Sergeant and a named PCSO from the Neighbour Policing Unit responsible for this area. There are no significant operations in place in Fernhurst at present, as there are no significant trends or patterns in the area that warrant a police response, however this can be reviewed in future if the situation changes.

With regards to general crime prevention, Chief Inspector Keating-Jones advised that the Divisional Response Teams have 24/7 response capability across Chichester. These teams aim to respond to emergencies within 20 minutes. Grade 2 situations are responded to within 4 hours, with Grade 3 situations requiring a response within 72 hours.

In relation to burglaries, every dwelling or out-building should receive a response from the police, as per national direction. Chief Inspector Keating-Jones added that the Sussex police are 90% compliant with this practice and as Chairman of the police's daily management meetings, every burglary of an out-building is featured and reviewed. Any patterns detected upon review are highlighted to local officers.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones stated that he also works alongside the Quality Assurance Team to review police actions and lines of enquiries. There are robust processes in place to deal with serious offences that occur in the Fernhurst area, but no significant trends that require immediate attention.

Chief Inspector Keating-Jones confirmed he will send the relevant data to Cllr Newbery.

Cllr Newbery advised that the police distribute weekly bulletins regarding crime trends, which are reviewed by Linchmere Parish Council. However, the parish have advised that the information received in recent updates has been less specific, to the point where they regard the information as unhelpful.

Cllr Newbery asked the officers whether these bulletins will return to containing higher levels of detail, as shown in previous communications.

PCC Bourne advised that this would not be possible, as the information system was reformed several years ago and is now a national system.

Cllr Quail (on behalf of Cllr Todhunter): *How can we ensure that our community feels supported by the local police when they are based 25 miles away in Chichester?*

PCC Bourne stated that modern policing is now far more mobile, police can access their daily briefings via mobile data terminals and no longer need to stay in one area. As the police are now completing more work online, this increases police experience in dealing with digital crime. PCC highlighted the importance of visibility in policing but noted that it's also important for police to retain an online digital presence, as more crime is taking place online.

In addition to visibility, PCC Bourne stated that the management of non-emergency numbers is of the utmost importance. Following extensive investment in the Force Contact Control & Command Centre, the Sussex Police now have a Telephony system. This has improved the police response times from being in the bottom quartile in the country, to 8th place in responding to emergency calls. PCC Bourne advised that as of last week, the average response time was two and a half minutes, which is a strong response time. In general, these developments will help improve public confidence.

Cllr James Vivian - *An analysis of criminal charge rates by LawHive has shown that criminal charge rates in Chichester are 30% lower than the national average. I'm aware that CPS takes charging decisions, but I'm curious to hear your perspective as to why this is the case and why access to justice is so different in Chichester, compared to other areas?*

PCC Bourne advised that upon reviewing the statistics, this could be due to a lower rate of crime, as this results in less charges being submitted. This is an area that PCC Bourne can review with the CPS during the next Criminal Justice Board meeting.

The Chair queried the officers on illegal evictions and advised that this has become a significant issue in her ward in the past year. There were several occasions on which she had been called out to intervene with illegal evictions. The Chair clarified that there were no bailiff's appointments for these evictions. During two of these evictions, the police were called and, on both occasions, took no action and stated that they were present to prevent a breach of the peace.

The Chair added that during both incidents, she highlighted that these evictions were illegal and that the landlords had not followed the correct procedures. In one of these instances, the Chair was forced to contact Chichester District Council's Out of Hours Department to secure accommodation for a resident in her ward.

The Chair advised that, based on personal experience in her ward, the police do not interfere with illegal evictions and will not explain to landlords, if present, that the evictors are committing an illegal act by not taking their tenants through the courts.

The Chair asked the officers for their perspectives on this position.

PCC Bourne advised that, whilst she's not familiar with legalisation that covers illegal evictions, if there are any specific cases that the Committee would like to highlight, these can be sent to her office, or via the Sussex Police department to investigate further.

The Chair thanked the officers for their attendance and the information provided.

16 **Verbal Update from Members of the Budget Task & Finish Group**

Cllr Brookes-Harmer introduced the item and provided Members with feedback from the Budget Task & Finish Group.

RESOLVED:

The Committee is requested to note the feedback provided from the Member appointed to the Task & Finish Group.

17 **Corporate Plan Review - Task & Finish Group - Final Report**

Mr Buckley introduced the item and briefed Members on the Task & Finish Group's objectives and function.

The final report reviews all key projects and performance indicators that support the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022-2025. The report highlights any projects that are in a state of exception (off target). The Task and Finish Group approved of the reasons provided for these exceptions on 14 November 2023.

Cllr Newberry asked whether the number of exceptions recorded is comparable to previous years.

Mr Buckley confirmed that this is a normal number of exceptions. The report serves as a point in time to review the upcoming six-month period. At that time, there were a small selection of projects or PIs that were off from their original targets. The Group reviewed these cases during the meeting and confirmed that they were comfortable with the reasons provided.

RESOLVED:

The Committee is requested to note this report from the Corporate Plan Task and Finish Group and confirm that it is satisfied the Council is achieving satisfactory levels of performance against the targets and activities in the 2023/24 Corporate Plan mid-year progress report.

18 Chichester BID

The Chair welcomed Mrs Helen Marshall from BID.

Mrs Murphy introduced the item and informed the Committee of BID's (Business Improvement District) objectives, functions and provided a general outline of the organisation.

Mrs Murphy advised that the BID is a separate organisation to Chichester District Council and that the District Council pays BID levies. The most recent count showed that there are 21 hereditaments within the city, with the District Council paying BID levies on 20 of these properties.

Chichester District Council's total contribution is approximately £14,000 per annum. The BID does not receive any additional funding from the Council, however, the Council does charge BID for collecting the BID levy from levy payers across the city. This charge is subsequently deducted from the BID levy that is collected on BID's behalf.

Mrs Murphy stated that within the city, there are 632 hereditaments that pay a BID levy. This payment is made to the Council and then transferred to Chichester BID. These businesses are required to pay this levy, as per national legislation. Mrs Murphy noted that some organisations are exempt such as charities, however charity shops are not exempt. The levy charge is 1.25% of the 2017 rateable value.

The Chichester BID works closely alongside the District Council across several key areas, Mrs Murphy and a Council Member regularly attend BID Board meetings to maintain links and remain informed. The BID has also been invited to several Overview & Scrutiny Committees to provide updates on their projects and to discuss any upcoming themes.

Mrs Murphy advised that Chichester BID and the District Council are working on several projects, such as the Vision Project and work with various partners across the city.

Mrs Murphy introduced Mrs Marshall, the Chair of Chichester BID.

Mrs Marshall briefed Members on BID's highlights from 2023 and provided further information on the services offered by BID.

During 2023, the organisation focused on supporting independent businesses in the city. With over 600 hereditaments in the area, approximately 250 of these are independent businesses. Mrs Marshall emphasised the importance of these businesses in the changing economy.

To support these organisations and promote co-operation amongst the independent businesses, the BID has developed a new brand "Proudly independent, Proudly Chichester". A section of the BID's website has been dedicated to these businesses and their promotion, the site also contains a full directory of all the member businesses listed in Chichester.

Mrs Marshall advised that the BID hosts social campaigns throughout the year that also highlight these independent businesses and provide information to local entrepreneurs. "Proudly independent, Proudly Chichester" has also benefitted from local press coverage, being published in the Chichester Observer upon launch, in addition to having their Indie Gift Guide published during Christmas.

The BID also works with other local organisations to promote member businesses, such as V2 Radio who provide extensive giveaways. Mrs Marshall added that the gift cards provided by BID during the giveaways are accepted by member businesses.

To provide further support to these independent businesses, the BID hosts regular networking events, which have received positive feedback and grown in membership over time.

Mrs Marshall advised that BID is particularly active during the Christmas period, working on events such as the Switch On Ceremony and the Character Trail Event. The BID also made improvements to their seasonal branding and added several new features to their website.

Mrs Marshall added that 2023 was a positive year for the Chichester Gift Card, which is operated and managed by the BID. The BID does not profit from the card, however the card encourages discretionary spending to be kept in the city's businesses. Approximately 170 businesses in Chichester now accept this gift card, and the BID has recently hit the milestone of a total of £80,000 spent via their gift card. Additionally, the BID has launched a Live After 5 Gift Card, which promotes the evening and night-time economy.

2023 also saw the Rangers Scheme rebranded and launched as the Chichester City Ambassadors, which is funded by the BID and Chichester City Council. Staff members are highly visible in the community and fully trained in dealing with conflict and antisocial behaviour. These ambassadors take a co-operative approach to dealing with local crime and have great communications with the local police and community wardens, providing information wherever possible.

Mrs Marshall highlighted that two large partnerships have been finalised this year, one being with Chichester Cathedral. The BID collaborated with the cathedral to promote the Peace Dove Initiative, subsequently the BID has strong communications with the cathedral's marketing team.

Additionally, the BID has developed stronger communications with Chichester College, with both organisations co-hosting the Skills In The City Event, which launches on 7 February 2024 and will commence from 22 April 2024. The event will focus on matching the requirements of local businesses with the skills of the students from the college.

Upcoming collaborations include the Novium for Roman Week, and Chichester Pride to host a potential parade in the city. The BID will also collaborate with the Wild in Art organisation & Chestnut Tree House across several events during the

summer. Mrs Marshall advised that the BID is in progress to achieve the Business Excellence award, working alongside the Economic Development Team and Council.

Mrs Marshall advised Members that the BID has submitted two applications to the UK SPF Fund. The first project is to enable the cathedral green to become an accessible and viable event space in the city centre, with power and wi-fi provided. The second project is to develop improvements on Crane Street. The proposed scheme will promote outdoor performances, working alongside Culture Spark.

Cllr Brookes-Harmer highlighted the importance of education, particularly in the city and asked whether the BID has communications in place with Chichester University.

Mrs Marshall confirmed that communications are in place via the business school at the university, however this can be improved upon. The Skills in The City Initiative is the first step in improving links with the local college, Mrs Marshall would like to see similar steps taken with the university, as it's important to retain talent from Chichester in the local area. This also helps keep the city as an attractive investment location.

Mrs Marshall added that she will continue to identify the standard services the BID will deliver, in addition to outlining some of the extra-curricular projects, such as establishing stronger ties with the local organisations.

Cllr Brookes-Harmer thanked Mrs Marshall for her response and added that Wi-Fi access is another important factor to consider, particularly in modern cities.

Cllr Brookes-Harmer asked whether the gift card is available digitally.

Mrs Marshall confirmed that the gift card is available digitally and physically and agreed that Wi-fi access is incredibly important to attract people into the city, particularly young people and students. The BID's application for the cathedral will provide Wi-Fi access in this area, which is a step in the right direction.

Cllr Potter stated that he has noticed several new businesses opening in the city and asked whether these businesses voluntarily register to pay contributions to the BID. Cllr Potter also asked whether existing BID members have provided feedback regarding the Council's proposal to increase car park charges.

Mrs Marshall advised that new businesses are automatically registered to the BID, as they are under a mandate to pay the levy. The BID focuses on establishing contact with these new businesses as soon as possible, to provide information on the benefits the BID will provide.

With regards to car parks, Mrs Marshall stated that there is a general perception that Chichester's Parking is expensive. Upon reviewing the fees for other areas, she does not believe the parking fees to be high. There are however opportunities to adjust these rates to encourage the local economy during certain periods.

Cllr Potter advised that he has received feedback which indicates that some of the high car parking charges discourage people from shopping in the city centre, as they would rather park for free on the outskirts.

Mrs Marshall accepted that she has received this feedback to a limited extent but emphasised that the services offered by the local businesses provide a unique experience. This will continue to be a focus for the BID.

Cllr Quail highlighted the financial restrictions that were present during her own time working with the BID and asked whether the organisation can hit their objectives, despite being under-resourced.

Mrs Marshall advised that the levy is fixed at 1.25% of the non-domestic rate. The levy fluctuates, accordingly to occupancy of the BID's units and the levy rate. It's important to also keep reserves for levy refunds.

Mrs Marshall believes that the business model for BIDs needs to be reviewed, considering declining business rates. In the meantime, the BID is seeking to secure additional resources. This has been achieved via several successful BID sponsorships and surplus contributions from supporting BID levy members. Mrs Marshall has also had discussions with organisations, to discuss potentially becoming a voluntary BID levy payer.

Whilst it's positive to receive strong support from BID members, Mrs Marshall acknowledged that it is difficult financial model to manage. Mrs Marshall stated that she is committed to ensuring that the BID is impactful as possible, whilst maintaining low costs.

The Chair thanked Mrs Marshall and Mrs Murphy for the information provided to the Committee.

19 **Late Items**

There were no late items.

20 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no restricted items for consideration.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm

CHAIRMAN

Date:

