

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

## Report of Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

to  
**Executive Briefing**  
on  
**11 June**

Report prepared by: Carl Robinson – Director of Public  
Protection

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### Recruitment of Special Constables

#### Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s) Executive Councillor: Councillor Terry

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#### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the process to be undertaken to recruit 34 Special Constables to provide additional support and visibility across all Wards in Southend.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note the process to be undertaken for recruitment of Special Constables for Southend.
- 2.2 That officers continue to liaise with Essex Police to develop a suitable model of recruitment of Special Constables for Southend.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 Investigating the potential to recruit 34 Special Constables now, is part of the current 10 point plan of the Conservative Administration.
- 3.2 **Current pool of Special Constables** – Essex Police operate an open running recruitment drive for those interested in becoming special constables. In Southend, there is a pool of approximately 40 Special Constables who are based at Southend Police station. Their role is to support mainstream policing across the Borough, both dealing with local community issues and responding to 999 calls and emergencies.
- 3.3 Essex Police (via local police senior management) deploy the Southend contingent based on demand and need/priority, and availability of officer time – as they are volunteers and unpaid. Essex Police will largely guarantee that these officers work in the Wards of Southend and not be deployed outside of the Borough. External Borough deployment would only happen in the event of a

significant emergency. Generally, the Special Constables work Friday and Saturday evenings, and support key events where footfall is high.

- 3.4** In addition to the Police pool, Leigh Town Council have been involved in recruiting volunteers recently. Unfortunately, having had 6 volunteers initially, none have yet completed the recruitment process, and only one volunteer is still engaged in the assessment process.
- 3.5** **Process to recruit** – this is a Police led and owned process managed by Essex Police Recruitment Division. Recruitment is recognised as being rather drawn out, in that in the first instance, there is a robust vetting procedure that can take up to 6 months plus to complete, an Assessment Centre requirement and then a 6 month period of training. Following those stages the new recruit is then on probation for a two year period and can only work on their own following successful completion of their probationary period.
- 3.6** The current countywide commentary on the recruitment process is that many drop out or don't attend the assessment centres and therefore actual final appointment is nowhere the near the numbers that initially applied. The experience of Leigh Town Council is an example of this.
- 3.7** **Opportunities to strengthen the recruitment drive** – Although there are processes in place for recruitment, Essex Police have indicated they would be happy to explore further opportunities to strengthen its Special Constable recruitment campaign in Southend and their aim has been to double its Special Constabulary by 2020. This may result in a bespoke arrangement for Southend.
- 3.8** **Funding** – funding of Special Constables is a long term investment.

£34,000 has been proposed to support the introduction of 34 Special Constables to Southend. The total cost for training each Special Constable to enable them to work in the community is approx. £3,000, so a potential total of £102,000.

Therefore if it was Members intention to support the full training cost of 34 Special Constables, there would be a shortfall of approx. £68,000.

Potential funding options include:

- 3.8.1** Commit a further budget of approx. £68,000 to support the full cost of training for 34 Special Constables. Any volunteers would then enter the Police Recruitment process.
- 3.8.2** An opportunity exists within the recruitment process for local businesses to employ Special Constables, allowing them time off to undertake their training / duties.
- 3.8.3** Utilise the £34,000 for a designated promotion campaign to encourage more local residents to apply for the Special Constable role via local media and communication outlets. Any volunteers would then enter the Police Recruitment process.

- 3.8.4** Utilise the £34,000 for a more specific campaign that could be tailored to attract local residents who may wish to solely work in local community policing - and not undertake other duties of the Special Constables remit. These officers could then be assigned to the Community Safety Hub at the police station – which is the centre of community policing for Southend, within which the Council’s Community Safety Unit are based and are deployed from.
- 3.8.5** Provide £34,000 to Essex Police to utilise as part of the costs of current Special Constables recruitment process, to help target additional Special Constables for Southend.
- 3.8.6** It must be noted that Special Constables operate across the whole of a District Policing area, however, with investment from local councils for example, there is an opportunity for a partnership approach to deliver more dedicated policing to specific areas that could not be achieved within the existing operating model, potentially creating a more bespoke arrangement.

#### **4. Other Options**

See 3.8 above for options

#### **5. Reasons for Recommendations**

Options provided for Members to discuss and to provide guidance to officers in how to progress this piece of work.

#### **6. Corporate Implications**

##### **6.1** Contribution to Council’s Vision & Corporate Priorities

Southend 2050 Ambitions:

**Safe & Well** – 1. People in all parts of the borough feel safe and secure at all times;

**Active & Involved** - 4. A range of initiatives to help communities come together to enhance their own neighbourhood;

**Pride & Joy** - 1. There is a tangible sense of pride in the place and local people are actively and knowledgeably, talking up Southend.

##### **6.2** Financial Implications

Linked to £34k funded by the Council or further amounts that Members may wish to allocate.

##### **6.3** Legal Implications

Linked to the remit that Special Constables would have within the Borough / authorisation to undertake enforcement. Following successful training, there is a probation period of 24 months where Special Constables can only operate by accompanying a Police Officer. Following that period, they can work independently. The remit of the Special Constables is not directly dictated by the Council, but by Essex Police.

**6.4** People Implications

Linked to the Southend 2050 Ambitions above at 6.1.

**6.5** Property Implications

None.

**6.6** Consultation

TBA.

**6.7** Equalities and Diversity Implications

TBA.

**6.8** Risk Assessment

TBA.

**6.9** Value for Money

Options provided above for discussion and potential value for money.

**6.10** Community Safety Implications

Linked to supporting the wider Community Safety agenda and support to the partners including Council's Community Safety team and Police.

**6.11** Environmental Impact

None.

**7. Background Papers**

None.

**8. Appendices**

None.