

## Appendix 5

### STATEMENT OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CLEVELAND ON CLEVELAND POLICE MOUNTED SECTION

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> the Chief Constable advised me that in her opinion, as a highly experienced senior police officer, she did not need the mounted section to deliver policing in Cleveland. She did this against a backdrop of severely diminishing resources. She did it having sought the opinions of stakeholders within the force and the views of colleagues in forces elsewhere, both with and without mounted sections. In short she came to her view in a considered and professional manner as I would expect and she arrived at her conclusion reluctantly.

I undertook to seek the views of people locally and scrutinise this conclusion. I am grateful for the efforts taken by local people and the interest they have shown.

I took until 30<sup>th</sup> June to receive views and have concluded that the decision to disband the mounted section is the right one, under the circumstances which now exist.

The evidence and views I received fall into the following categories:

#### 1. Operational

Many people commented that the police were essential for crowd control, especially at football matches.

However crowds that are deemed higher risk are thankfully a rarity in Cleveland. There are unlikely to be even a handful of football matches that need significant policing in the next season.

Most forces no longer have mounted sections. The reason that horses tend to be used is often simply because they are available. If they were not, then police officers would use different tactics. Police Officers with responsibility for such events are trained specifically to police the events which includes assessing how best that may be undertaken. If officers on foot are used, rather than officers on horses, then there may be a need for more – but that need is so rare it can be discounted. I have concluded therefore there is no significant evidence of a policing need to have a mounted section.

#### 2. Cost

Many people have stated that the cost is small in comparison to the budget of the force.

Cleveland police budget is £137m in 2013-14, including government grant and council tax

We are in the throes of a £26m cuts programme to meet government austerity measures. We are already engaged in cutting around 300 police officers; also in reducing senior and middle management costs; and in looking to build a better HQ, which would be cheaper to run etc.

The latest Comprehensive Spending Review cuts us even further and so we will need to be even more drastic. Every police officer represents an investment of some £50,000 per year.

The mounted section costs some £550,000. The bulk of this expenditure is on the staff assigned to the section rather than the horses. This is a considerable sum. If it is not found from the mounted section then it will require cuts elsewhere. I have made it plain to all that my priority, in representing the population of Cleveland is neighbourhood policing. Together with the Chief Constable, I will scrutinise all expenditure to ensure that this priority is protected as far as is possible from cuts. It is unfortunate therefore that this means other areas must bear the brunt of budget cuts.

It has been argued that the mounted section could earn revenue to support its continued existence in Cleveland. Whilst there are opportunities to assist other forces and bring in income, these occasions are very rare and whilst the section is out of Cleveland, then it is not available for policing locally.

Sponsorship has also been raised as a possible way to maintain the section. I met with campaigners and agreed that if sponsors come forward and are willing to make a 3 year commitment in excess of £500 000 then I will have meaningful discussions with them. Clearly this cannot delay the process and the deadline for this is the Police and Crime Panel Meeting July 18.

### 3. Public Relations

I have heard the argument that the horses provide great public relations for the force – people like them and engage with the officers in the mounted section when they patrol. This is undoubtedly true. People I have engaged with also understand the austerity applied across the public sector and that there are things we need and things we like. The mounted section falls into the latter category.

### 4. Ormesby Hall

I accept that the police horses have become part of the establishment at Ormesby Hall and that people like to visit and see them there. However my core responsibility must be policing and so whilst the dog section will remain there for the rest of the lease period, that may not always be the case.

I have visited Ormesby Hall and spoken to police employees. I have also recently met local volunteers about their concerns and discussed future input into issues such as the re-homing of police horses.

### Conclusion

It is clear from this exercise that emotions have run high – this is an issue dear to the heart of many local people. I am able to assure people locally that there are no concerns that have not been very carefully considered in arriving at the decision that Cleveland does not need a mounted section.

What is certain is that further drastic measures will need to be taken, in order to balance the declining budget position of Cleveland Police. I will ensure every decision is taken in as considered and professional a way as this one.

Most of all, I will ensure that the decisions taken are in the best interests of the safety of some 600,000 people across the 82 wards in the Cleveland area.

I will be presenting a report on this process to the next meeting of the Police & Crime panel on 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Barry Coppinger  
PCC for Cleveland  
2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013