

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 5 December 2012

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Michael Doody	Warwick District Council
Alan Farnell	Warwickshire County Council
Eithne Goode	Warwickshire County Council
Dennis Harvey	Nuneaton & Bedworth Council
David Johnston	Warwickshire County Council
Peter Morson	North Warwickshire Borough Council
Derek Poole	Rugby Borough Council
Gillian Roache	Stratford on Avon District Council (from item 6 onwards)
Ray Sweet	Warwickshire County Council
Helen Walton	Warwickshire County Council

Independent members (appointed at this meeting):

Bob Malloy
Robin Verso

Invitee:

Ron Ball Police and Crime Commissioner

Former Police Authority Officers

Oliver Winters Chief Executive
Dave Stenning Policy Officer, Resources & Governance

WCC Officers:

David Carter Strategic Director, Resources (Monitoring officer for the Panel)
Greta Needham Head of Law & Governance, Resources
Jane Pollard Corporate Legal Services Manager
Janet Purcell Democratic Services Manager

1. Appointment of Chair

David Carter welcomed members and the recently elected Police and Crime Commissioner to this first meeting of the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillor David Johnston proposed (and was seconded by Councillor Eithne Goode) that the appointment of co-opted members be the first item to enable their immediate input into the meeting.

This proposal was put to the vote and was lost.

Nominations were taken for Chair as follows:

Councillor Peter Morson proposed Councillor Dennis Harvey (and was seconded by Councillor Eithne Goode)

Councillor Alan Farnell proposed Councillor Michael Doody and was seconded by Councillor Helen Walton.

Councillor Michael Doody received four votes and Councillor Dennis Harvey five votes.

Resolved

That Councillor Dennis Harvey be appointed chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair called for nominations for vice-chair of the Panel.

Councillor Alan Farnell proposed Councillor Michael Doody for vice-Chair of the Panel. This was seconded and a vote was taken, the result being four for and none against.

Resolved

That Councillor Michael Doody be appointed vice-chair of the Police and Crime Panel.

3. Apologies for absence

No apologies had been received prior to the meeting but Councillor Gillian Roache had been delayed and arrived later in the meeting.

4. Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

5. Co-option of Independent Members to the Panel

The Chair referred to the selection process in which he and other members had taken part and reported that the selection panel had agreed to recommend the appointment of Bob Malloy and Robin Verso.

The Chair formally proposed that Bob Malloy and Robin Verso be appointed to the Panel and was seconded by Councillor Michael Doody.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed with no one voting against.

Resolved

That Bob Malloy and Robin Verso be appointed as independent co-opted members on the Police and Crime Panel

6. Police and Crime Commissioner

The Chair welcomed Ron Ball, the recently elected Police and Crime Commissioner, and invited the Panel and officers to introduce themselves.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner shared his initial thoughts on policing in Warwickshire and how he saw his role. Ron Ball expressed his thanks for the support he had received from Oliver Winters the Chief Executive, Dave Clarke, Treasurer, and other officers in the former Police Authority. Ron Ball recognised the long standing experience and knowledge of the Police Authority members and had invited the former independent members and Councillors John Vereker and Bob Hicks to assist him on a voluntary basis during his first few months.

Ron Ball reported that he intended to appoint a temporary chief executive for 6-9 months. It may also be appropriate, in light of the collaboration between Warwickshire and West Mercia Police, to appoint one Chief Executive for both Warwickshire and West Mercia Commissioners.

Ron also reported that he had invited former County Education Officer and former Police Authority, Eric Wood, to be his deputy. This would be subject of a confirmation hearing in January 2013.

Ron envisaged the cost of running his office would be at least £50k less than the cost of the former Police Authority and savings may even be more. At present, the office would remain in Northgate Street although public meetings would require an accessible building and Shire Hall would be appropriate for these. In terms of approach, he envisaged the staff who were transferring from the Police Authority will have a more public facing role and for some staff this would involve more engagement with the public than they may have experienced before.

Chief Constable

Ron had met with Andy Parker, the Chief Constable and had had initial discussion about the force performance and priorities. Ron was confident that he would have a good working relationship with Andy Parker, but added that he would go through the proper process in considering the confirmation of the appointment.

Collaboration

In terms of Warwickshire and West Mercia Police Force collaboration, Ron advised that both he and the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner had met and agreed that they would support the work being undertaken on the alliance.

Monitoring Policing Performance

The Commissioner would meet weekly with the Chief Constable but would also have public meetings. The first of these would take place on Monday 10 December, to which Panel members were invited, along with any member of the public or other interested parties.

Ron Ball reported that he was pleased with the performance data he had seen to date. There had been only a handful of complaints and the trends on crime was downwards. For instance compared to 2011, there were 1900 fewer victims of crime, 173 fewer vehicle crimes, 1000 fewer incidents of anti-social behaviour, 133 fewer victims of serious violence and 136 fewer house burglaries.

Crime element

This was a new responsibility for the Police and Crime Commissioner which had not been a responsibility of the former Police Authority. Ron Ball recognised the important role of the voluntary sector and the contribution they already make but that may be increased. Ron Ball supported the focus on early intervention and work with voluntary sector would be a priority for him.

Preparing the Budget

Work was already underway and the Commissioner was confident that deadlines would be met. He added that his intention was to ensure there was no increase in precept, although he recognised the full financial position was not known at present and he would revisit this if he felt there was no option. He assured the Panel that he would share the budget with them, not just the precept figure, to ensure an open discussion. Councillor Helen Walton asked how the Commissioner would ensure the budget keeps on track, given that there were budget pressures yet to be met by West Mercia. Ron Ball replied that both the West Mercia Commissioner and Chief Constable had expressed their commitment to meeting their budget challenge.

Strategic V operational

Ron Ball was confident that it was possible for him to focus on strategic issues, although there may be exceptional cases where an incident is of such public interest that he considers he has to question on behalf of that public interest. Such a case had happened in Stratford when the Police had taken a decision not to prosecute the driver of the car that had crashed into a cafe. Ron Ball advised that he had asked the Police to look again at their decision and it was then referred to the CPS for review.

Public consultation

Councillor David Johnston asked how the Commissioner envisaged undertaking public consultation. Ron Ball replied that he did not yet have a blueprint for this (and was starting with a half clean sheet of paper) but saw his role in engaging with the public as essential. As well as consulting identifiable groups (which could involve getting bodies together and drawing up a structure for communication), his approach was also to speak to people in the community directly and informally and so gauge views on the ground.

Business Plan

Robin Verso asked how the Commissioner intended to develop the plan and whether existing priorities (such as those developed by the Community Safety Partnerships) would be retained.

Ron Ball gave his assurance that he would take account of the work that had already been undertaken. The plan will be based on this work and then align this with his manifesto to see what adjustments may be required. (It was agreed that Ron's manifesto be circulated to the Panel).

Councillor Peter Morson asked whether the Commissioner had a priority to increase the number of officers on the beat. Ron Ball replied that he was discussing the strengthening of the safer neighbourhood teams and there was a plan to increase special constables from 240 to 300. He considered this would be affordable. He also supported the move to reduce bureaucracy and sickness absence. With regard the deployment of police officers, he considered more work needed to be done on explaining to the public that policing is more than having officers on the beat and that it is not possible or desirable to have wide coverage. The fear of crime (and those who exploit the fear of crime) needs to be tackled.

The Commissioner thanked the Panel for allowing him to outline his thoughts and looked forward to further discussions with them.

7. Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure

The Panel considered their Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure as circulated to them. Bob Malloy suggested that the terms of reference include an explicit reference to the Panel's role in reviewing the Annual Report.

Councillor Eithne Goode asked whether substitutes would be allowed and was advised that it was for each appointing authority to appoint substitutes in accordance with that authority's procedure. It would be helpful for members to give prior notice of any substitution to ensure substitutes receive agendas and papers.

Resolved

- (1) That the Panel notes the Terms of Reference and Panel Arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, and agrees the addition of 'Review of Annual Report' to the list of powers.
- (2) That the Panel adopts the Rules of Procedure set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

8. Complaints Handling

The Panel considered a report that set out a proposed process for handling complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

Resolved

- (1) That the Panel approves the arrangements for handling complaints as set out in section 3 of the report.
- (2) That the Panel delegates to the Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner the powers and duties set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (3) That the Panel notes the overall obligations on the Police and Crime Panel set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

9. Future Business

The Panel agreed the following schedule of meetings:

January 9 (10.00 am) – Panel Briefing
January 11 (2 pm) - confirmation hearings for the posts of Chief Executive and Deputy PCC
February 7 (2pm) consideration of precept
February 21 (2pm) Back-up date for revised precept if needed
March 12 (2pm) – Draft Crime and Disorder Plan

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.