

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 1 February 2018

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Richard Chattaway	Warwickshire County Council
Mark Cargill	Warwickshire County Council
Nicola Davies	Warwickshire County Council
Tony Jefferson	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Gwynne Pomfrett	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Derek Poole	Rugby Borough Council
Andrew Thompson	Warwick District Council
Adrian Warwick	Warwickshire County Council

Independent Members

Andy Davis
Bob Malloy

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Neil Hewison	Chief Executive
Neil Tipton	Head of Media and Communications
Philip Seccombe	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Rob Tromans	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
Elizabeth Hall	Treasurer
Sara Ansell	Head of Finance

Warwickshire County Council Officers

John Betts	Head of Finance
Jane Pollard	Legal Services Manager
Stefan Robinson	Senior Democratic Services Officer

1. General

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Davey. Councillor Dirveiks was substituted by Councillor Holland.

2) Members' Disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair, Councillor Davies, announced that the Panel's support officer, Stefan Robinson, would be undertaking a new role at Oxford City Council in March 2017. The Panel passed a vote of thanks to Stefan and Neil Hewison added his

thanks on behalf of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The Chair explained that Hassan Hafiz would be supporting the Panel in the interim period until the vacancy was filled.

4) Minutes of the previous meetings held on 30 November 2017

The public minutes, and exempt minutes, of the meetings held on 30 November 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

3. Proposed Local Police Precept 2018/19

The Chair invited the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Philip Secombe, to present his proposal for the Local Policing Precept for 2018/19. The PCC said that when he was elected in May 2016, the Force had a substantial level of financial reserves. For that reason, the precept was frozen in 2017 so that a portion of the reserves could be put towards funding revenue expenditure. Despite having no rise in precept, the Force's budget increased as a result of the additional funding from reserves. The freeze in the precept also sent a message to the Force that efficiencies would need to be made and tough savings targets were set.

The PCC explained that his proposal for 2018/19 was to raise the precept by £12 per Band D Property (6.25%). This was the maximum amount allowed to be raised without a local referendum. This would help generate £2.4m of additional funding, in addition to an unexpected £0.5m grant from Central Government. He wanted the all of this additional funding (£2.9m) to be spent on funding frontline Police Officers. Despite the Crime Survey for England and Wales reporting that there had been a reduction in crime, the PCC said he preferred to use the number of reported offences as the basis for assessing the level of demand on the Force.

The PCC explained that reported crimes were rising and crimes were becoming more complex to investigate. Therefore, the Force required investment in a range of digital and IT projects to ensure that it was appropriately equipped to respond. This included investment in:

- A new Operational Command Centre
- Body worn video cameras
- Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras
- Athena

- SAABSafe

There was also a drive towards improving the use of the police estate and aligning resources with demand as part of the new Alliance Policing Model. The PCC explained that under his precept proposal, the Force could expect to have a similar number of officers as it did moving forward. For 2018/19, there had been no reduction of grant funding from the Home Office.

The PCC said that the most significant budget pressure was pay and price inflations, accounting for £3.2m more in 2018/19 than it did in 2017/18. He highlighted that approximately 80% of the Force's budget was for staff and officer pay. Over the past year, the council tax base for Warwickshire had grown by 2.36%, meaning that more income was available from those additional households. As part of the PCC's financial forecasting, a £6 rise in precept for a Band D property had been assumed for 2019/20 and the equivalent of a 2% rise for 2020/21. By 2021/22, a recurring savings target of £11.7m was expected on the revenue budget.

Financial reserves were at £26.1m on 1 April 2017, and were projected to be £16.7m by 1 April 2018. £3.8m would be used to support the budget over the Medium Term Financial Plan, and a further £4m would be invested in infrastructure. £1.2m would be used to fund known risks and £0.8m to transform policing. The minimum level of reserves would not go below £5m which was approximately 5% of the revenue budget.

The PCC explained that capital expenditure of £26.3m was expected between 2018/19 and 2021/22. £0.6m was for approved estate projects, and a further £13.5m for the provision of new schemes. A further £7.7m would be allocated for ICT projects, £4.0m on vehicles and £0.5m on equipment. However, the full details of the capital programme in the long term were somewhat undecided. In relation to the sale of the Leek Wootton site, a capital receipt was expected in 2019.

The PCC outlined the three options for a precept rise that he presented in the public consultation. He clarified that a "no rise" option was not presented in the consultation because he believed it was not an appropriate option, because this would have led to an unsustainable reduction in Police Officer numbers. The three consultation options presented were:

Option 1 – increase the police precept by £12 per year (on a Band D property). This equated to a rise of 6.25%.

Option 2 – increase the police precept by £10 per year (on a Band D property). This equated to a rise of 5.21%.

Option 3 – increase the police precept by £8 per year (on a Band D property). This equated to a rise of 4.17%.

The public consultation ran from 22 December 2017 to 19 January 2018, and received a total of 1501 Responses; 1349 of which were from Warwickshire residents. The results of the consultation were as follows:

- 70.9% (878) were in favour of a £12 increase
- 7.3% (90) were in favour of £10 increase
- 14.0% (173) were in favour of £8 increase
- 7.9% (98) opposed an increase in their comments
- 110 respondents from Warwickshire failed to complete survey with no preference indicated

The PCC said that this was a statistically significant sample of the population, and the amount of responses received to the consultation compared favourably to other Force areas. Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications at the OPCC, added that this was the highest response rate to any consultation done by the Warwickshire PCC. The PCC concluded by mentioning other groups he had consulted including:

- Local Authorities
- The Federation of Small Businesses
- The National Farmers Union
- The Police Federation
- The Superintendents Association
- Unison

The Panel expressed thanks to Elizabeth Hall, Treasurer at the OPCC, and the PCC for the open way in which they had presented information to the Panel and its Budget Working Group.

Councillor Warwick said the consultation presented the impact of a precept rise on officer numbers in an ambiguous way. He said that some people, as evidenced in the comments received, believed that Police Officer numbers would increase as a result of a rise in the precept. He asked what level of service residents would receive as a result of a £12 increase on a Band D property, and how many Police Officers could be expected.

The PCC explained that the establishment number of officers (the number of officers that are funded for) was 926 this time last year. This had decreased to 905 in 2018. The PCC clarified that it was the Chief Constable who decided how the money was spent. He said that based on previous expectations of raising the precept by 1.99%, we had expected to lose in the region of 60 officers. However, with new flexibility granted by Central Government to raise the precept by £12, he expected that the current number of Police Officers could be maintained.

Councillor Chattaway referred to Home Office statistics on the police workforce that stated Warwickshire Police had 853 Police Officers in September 2016 and 823 in September 2017, representing a reduction of 30 officers over 12 months. He asked for further clarity on how many Police Officers could be expected as a result of a £12 precept rise. The PCC said he would guess that the force had approximately 800 Police Officers at the present time, and hoped to have in the region of 850 by this time next year. Neil Tipton highlighted that the Home Office presented workforce data based on full time equivalent posts, which did not take account of the number of people employed on a part-time basis.

In response to questions, the PCC explained that he had previously hoped to retain at least 33 Police Officers as a result of a £12 increase in the precept. However, he challenged the Chief Constable to revise this target and he now believed 50 Police Officers could be retained.

Councillor Warwick said that much of the proposed increase in the precept would only cover the cost of pay and price inflation. He asked for further reassurance that there would not be a further reduction in Police Officer numbers. The PCC said there would be more Police Officers than there were currently, and that IT and mobile working initiatives were all designed to maximise the efficiency of those officers. The Chair requested that the Panel be provided with written detail that sets out how the PCC is defining Police Officer numbers, and what the current and project numbers are expected to be.

Councillor Chattaway asked whether any work had been done to assess what number of Police Officers was required to effectively police Warwickshire. The Deputy PCC, Rob Tromans, explained that the Transformation Director was looking at these types of issues, but no finite conclusion could be made on the policing requirement because issues such as cybercrime and social media harassment presented such an extensive and growing level of demand on the Force. He said it was unlikely that the Force would be able to cope with the highest levels of demand at all times. The PCC wanted to reassure the public however that these crimes would be investigated.

Councillor Holland said a rise in the precept base did not mean the job of policing would be easier. He suggested that new housing estates needed to be designed in such a way to reduce criminal behaviours, and that some developments had a high level of crime. The PCC said the Force commented on planning applications and that Section 106 contributions had been received by the Force from developers. Most recently, £0.6m was secured for a new development in Stratford District. Neil Hewison confirmed that Section 106 funding was retrieved prior to residents occupying newly built homes.

Bob Malloy highlighted that there was no increase in the precept for 2017/18, and Police Officer numbers had declined in that year. Conversely, the PCC was seeking a maximum increase in 2018/19, and this could have been offset by a smaller

increase in the previous year. He asked the PCC why financial forecasting had not been carried out beyond his electoral term, and asked whether his budget plans had a relationship with the electoral cycle. The PCC said that the freeze in the precept for 2017/18 was only possible because of a £7m subsidy from the reserves.

Councillor Cargill asked what action the PCC would be taking to maximise the use of the police estate, and highlighted a local case where he believed improvements could be made. The PCC said the latest evidence showed a 20 – 30% underutilisation of the space available across the estate. However, in the short term, the only major capital developments related to the sale of Leek Wootton and works on the forensics building. He did not expect a reduction in the number of police stations. Councillor Cargill requested that the police estate be added to the Panel's future work programme.

The Chair asked what the PCC was doing to monitor spending on estates. The PCC explained that he had monthly meetings with the Chief Constable where he reviewed the Money Matters Report, which provided details of estate projects. Councillor Pomfrett asked about the future of crime rates, and the PCC's expectations for rising crime. The PCC said crime rates may go up, but that the Police should not be blamed for a rise in crime. Rises in crime are primarily attributable to a number of social conditions and societal problems that the Police cannot be held to account for. Councillor Poole and the PCC both agreed that long term historic crimes had influenced current levels of recorded crime.

Reflecting on a number of high profile rape prosecutions in the national media that were withdrawn due to a lack of evidence, Councillor Cargill asked whether this had occurred in Warwickshire. The PCC said he was not aware of any cases in Warwickshire having this issue, and Neil Hewison said this matter was on the agenda for the next Local Criminal Justice Board and the outcome of that meeting could be relayed to the Panel.

Andy Davis raised a series of questions about the PCC's approach to public consultation. He asked whether the responses could be considered a representative sample, given that there was an overrepresentation of responses from Stratford District. He also asked what work had been undertaken to ensure that a proportionate number of responses were received from residents in North Warwickshire. Neil Tipton explained that the north of the county was less accessible by media releases, and that the south had more media outlets. The compressed time frame, as a result of the late provisional finance settlement on 19 December 2017, meant that the consultation period was relatively short. However, extensive targeting was done through social media so that different sections of the community were reached by the consultation. Neil highlighted that other forces were consulting before the finance settlement was released, meaning that their data was less useful after it was revealed that the 1.99% cap on the precept would be lifted.

Andy Davis also suggested that many of the groups invited to take part in the consultation were self-selecting and had a personal interest in the resourcing of the Police. This may have had implications for the consultation results. Neil Tipton said there would always be an element of self-selection in these types of consultation, but believed the results provided a reasonable basis to judge public opinion. Councillor Chattaway added that a digital consultation risked isolating certain sections of the community, and asked that more work was done to engage with those who did not have access to computers. Neil Tipton accepted that there were limitations to the consultation, and welcomed further feedback after the meeting.

Andy Davis said that it would be useful in future to receive information on the demography of those who responded, including whether they were tax payers, their ethnic origin, and whether they were police officers, for example. This would assist the PCC in understanding how different sections of society were under and overrepresented in the survey. The Panel agreed to consider the PCC's approach to public consultation at the meeting on 19 March 2018, where they would also be reviewing the PCC's Consultation and Engagement Strategy. Andy also asked what the outcome was of the face-to-face consultations that the PCC undertook. The PCC explained that there was no voting system in place on the different precept options, but he did not receive any objections to his proposals.

Councillor Poole asked how the PCC was demonstrating to the public that he was holding the Chief Constable to account for the Force's financial management and spending. Elizabeth Hall explained that the PCC reviewed the Force's Money Matters Report monthly, and also held the Force to account during the Alliance Governance Group meetings. The minutes of these meetings were publicly available, though some parts remained confidential. The PCC commented that there was a rigorous process in place for holding the Force to account.

Councillor Thompson asked what the process was for engaging with local Members of Parliament in the precept consultation. The PCC explained that all of the MPs in Warwickshire were invited to meet with him and comment on his proposals, but not all responded. Councillor Thompson also asked the PCC how much income he anticipated from the sale of the Leek Wootton site. The PCC said it would be in the region of several million pounds and that he had factored this into his income forecast. In response to a question from Councillor Jefferson, Elizabeth Hall said she would provide Councillor Jefferson with information on where injury and ill health payments feature in the accounts.

Councillor Warwick asked how confident the PCC was with the level of reserves projected for 2022. Elizabeth Hall explained that she had taken account of national guidance on the minimum level of reserves, and said the risks had been factored in. Warwickshire would end up with £6.9m in reserves by 2022. This level of reserves would in part be used to offset any delays in savings targets. However, the Force had a good track record of delivering on its savings targets. The use of reserves would be kept under review. The PCC said there was £1.6bn in police force

reserves nationally, and the Home Office wanted this to be reduced to a more appropriate level.

Councillor Warwick asked the PCC about how confident he was that the transformation savings targets could be reached, given that service specific savings had not been identified beyond 2019. Elizabeth Hall explained that the Transformation Director and the Transformation Board were responsible for identifying the savings. They would be reviewing every service within the Force, focusing on what was often referred to as the “back office” functions. Neil Hewison highlighted that many police staff provided vital support to Police Officers which enabled them to operate more effectively. It was unfortunate that the focus of these savings would be on these non-officer posts.

Councillor Chattaway said a decision on the precept was very difficult because people on low incomes in particular would not want to pay more, but they equally would not want a decrease in Police Officer numbers. Bob Malloy said he would be willing to support the PCC’s proposal for a £12 rise, subject to assurances that it would only be spent on Warwickshire services. The PCC said that the focus of the spending would be on frontline Police Officers in Warwickshire. A small amount of money may be spent on shared services with West Mercia as part of the Strategic Alliance, but no money would go towards frontline Police Officers in West Mercia.

Councillor Poole highlighted that Councillors had a role in explaining the precept to residents, and the PCC should provide clear information that helps the public understand exactly where resident’s money was being spent.

The PCC explained that the proposed rise in precept was a difficult decision to make, and he recognised the financial impact this would have, particularly on low income households. However, he had a duty to keep residents safe and believed the council tax banding system took account of those on lower incomes in smaller homes. He said the number of Police Officers was at its lowest point and more funding was needed, and that he could not justify not rising the precept by the maximum amount in the current context.

Councillor Warwick proposed that the Panel supports the PCC’s proposal to raise the Local Policing Precept by £12 per Band D property (6.25%) for 2018/19. This was seconded by Councillor Cargill. The Panel agreed to support the PCC’s proposal.

Resolved

That the Police and Crime Panel:

1. Supports the Police and Crime Commissioner’s proposal to raise the Local Policing Precept by £12 per Band D property (6.25%) for 2018/19, and provides a written report confirming this, together with any recommendations.

2. Recommends to the Police and Crime Commissioner that he:
 - a) Provide more clarity in future precept consultations concerning the impact any change in the precept will have on Police Officer numbers. The 2018/19 consultation could have been clearer, as evidenced by a number of respondents misinterpreting your proposals.
 - b) Considers revising future consultations to collect more detailed information on the demographic of those who respond, and take active steps to engage with those groups who are underrepresented. Some other areas sought to gather this information, and the Panel encourages the PCC to seek out examples of best practice.
 - c) Engages with the public more widely on the implications of the precept rise, so that residents understand where the additional money is being spent.
3. Requests that the Police and Crime Commissioner provides written detail on the current number of Police Officers, and expected number as a result of the precept rise. This should be included as part of the PCC's response to the Panel's letter which details the outcome of the precept meeting. The PCC's response should also include a clear definition of how he defines Police Officer numbers, and explain any discrepancies between Home Office workforce statistics and those used by the Force.

4. Work Programme 2018/19

Resolved

That the Police and Crime Panel:

1. Notes its work programme, including the addition of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Communication and Engagement Strategy to the 19 March 2018 meeting.
2. Includes the police estate in its future work programme.

5. Dates of Meetings 2018/19

The Chair invited the Panel to take note of the future meeting dates:

- Tuesday 27 February – Panel Development (closed session), Shire Hall.
- Monday 19 March 2018 (rescheduled from 26 April 2018) – Stratford District Council Offices
- Thursday 21 June 2018 - Warwickshire County Council, Shire Hall.

- Thursday 20 September 2018 - Location to be confirmed
- Wednesday 22 November 2018 - Location to be confirmed

6. Any Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

7. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

There was no requirement for the Panel to move into private session.

The meeting rose at 12:18

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Chair