

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 4 February 2019

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Richard Chattaway	Warwickshire County Council
Nicola Davies (Chair)	Warwickshire County Council
Neil Dirveiks	Warwickshire County Council
Pete Gilbert	Warwickshire County Council
Tony Jefferson	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Derek Poole (Vice Chair)	Rugby Borough Council
David Reilly	North Warwickshire 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)

Sara Ansell	Head of Finance
Elizabeth Hall	Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Hewison	Chief Executive
David Patterson	Performance and Scrutiny Policy Officer
Philip Seccombe	Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Tipton	Head of Media and Communications

Warwickshire County Council Officers

Tom McColgan	Senior Democratic Services Manager
Jane Pollard	Legal Services Manager

1. General

1) Apologies

Councillor Brain sent his apologies and Councillor Gilbert was present as a Substitute.

Councillor Longden sent his apologies for the meeting.

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

The Chair declared that her husband was joining Warwickshire Police as an officer.

3) Chair's Announcements

There were none.

4) Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2018

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. Public Question Time

There was no public involvement.

3. Proposed Local Police Precept 2019-20

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented the proposed budget for Warwickshire Police including the Proposed Local Police Precept increase of £24 p.a. for Band D properties for 2019-20 (Appendix 1). In his presentation the Commissioner highlighted the demand on the Force with Warwickshire Police likely to have recorded in excess of 40,000 crimes by the end of 2018/19. The Commissioner reported that so far in 2018/19 Homicide, Rape, Anti-Social Behaviour, Business Robbery, Bicycle Theft, Shoplifting and Burglary had all declined while Violence without Injury and Personal Robbery rates had risen. The Commissioner stated that the precept consultation had received over 2,500 responses the majority of which had supported increasing the precept by 12% to secure 85 officers along with additional Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Police Staff Investigators.

Councillor Poole stated that he had received feedback from his colleagues at Rugby Borough Council that they felt the proposed Rural Crime Team of four officers and a sergeant was not sufficient to cover a county that was 90% rural and asked that Councillor Poole request that the Commissioner speak to the Chief Constable about establishing two teams; one for the north of the county and one for the south. Councillor Warwick seconded the request for the Commissioner to speak to the Chief Constable.

Councillor Jefferson stated that the rural communities in Stratford-on-Avon in the south of the County would welcome Councillor Poole's proposal that two rural crime teams be established. Councillor Gilbert added his support for the rural crime team and emphasised that the impact of rural crime was felt across all communities as the perpetrators of 'rural' crimes also commit crimes in urban and suburban communities and the victims of crimes considered 'rural' may live in urban or suburban communities.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the new Rural Crime Team was a coming together of specialist officers from across the force into a single team. The team would look at issues such as unauthorised encampments, coursing, theft from farms as well as working with the harm hub on rural crime prevention strategies. The Commissioner reported that the National Farmers Union had been very positive about the proposal when they attended a precept consultation session and that the Rural Crime Team was a positive step in tackling rural crime in the County. The Commissioner stated that he would be happy to take the feedback from Rugby Councillors to the Chief Constable and discuss increasing the size of the team. The Commissioner reiterated that the Chief Constable's proposal was the beginning of building a more specialised response to rural crime within the force.

Councillor Warwick noted the change in the Commissioner's strategy of drawing down reserves to fund the revenue budget and instead opting to borrow and holding the reserves to cover any unforeseen costs resulting from the end of the alliance. Councillor Warwick sought assurances that any borrowing would be on a fixed rate and that the impact of borrowing on future revenue costs had been taken into account.

The Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the change in strategy was to allow the Commissioner and Chief Constable as much flexibility as possible given the uncertainty of the coming year. The borrowing strategy could be reviewed at any point in the year as the financial implications for the post alliance structure of Warwickshire Police became clearer. The cost of borrowing was currently very low which meant that it was prudent to look to borrow now rather than continue to draw down reserves which could lead to borrowing in the future when the market was less favourable.

In response to Councillor Chattaway, the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that the total reserves were around £18 million which was close to 20% of the annual budget. Of the total reserves £5 million was a general reserve and the remaining £13 million was earmarked for major projects such as the investment in ICT improvements. The Commissioner confirmed that the report showed that reserves were expected to fall to £11 million over 2019/20 even with the increase in the precept. The Commissioner stated that he felt that the £24 pa increase in the precept was justified despite the high level of reserves as the reserves were earmarked for vital investment projects and would not cover additional costs such as maintaining the vehicles. The Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner added that the consultation showed that residents supported an increase in the number of police officers which represented a long term investment for which the Force would require ongoing funding.

Councillor Warwick stated that the Budget Working Group had scrutinised the Police and Crime Commissioners Medium Term Financial Plan which detailed how the Commissioner planned to use the reserves above £5 million to invest in major projects and it was clear that this was not a case of the Force hoarding reserves.

Councillor Gilbert stated that while he was not generally in favour of increased taxation he recognised that the results of the consultation seemed to suggest that residents were willing to pay more towards the police force. Councillor Gilbert and Councillor Jefferson both urged the Commissioner to ensure that residents' expectations were managed as if they were paying more they would expect to see an increase in local policing and the time lag between an increased council tax bill and an increase in visible policing may cause dissatisfaction if residents were not expecting it and were not informed of the reasons.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that last year the police precept had increase by £6 which had enabled the Chief Constable to create an additional 50 officer posts and residents would start seeing the additional officers on the streets from June 2019. With the addition of another 85 officers in 2019/20 the Commissioner hoped that Warwickshire Police could reach 1000 officers by 2021/22. The Commissioner stated that there had been a sustained period of time in which the Force had not been recruiting and it had taken time to build up the recruitment and training capacity again with the infrastructure in place the Commissioner hoped that the rate at which new officers were recruited and trained could be increased. The Commissioner stressed that police officers had to be properly trained and there could never be an instant increase in numbers.

Councillor Warwick thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner for his openness about police officer numbers and for clearly laying out the reasons for the time taken to recruit into the additional officer post created both at Panel meetings and through the Budget Working Group. Councillor Warwick stated that the budget and the proposed precept were about planning ahead and sowing the seeds for the future. In light of the uncertainty caused by the end of the strategic alliance Warwickshire Police needed to have the resources to be in a position to take full advantage of any opportunities that may arise.

In response to Councillor Poole, The Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that the 85 new officers referred to in his budget were an addition to the existing establishment numbers and that a greater number of officers would in fact have to be recruited to account for officers leaving the force.

Councillor Gilbert sought assurances that Warwickshire Police would endeavour to recruit from all sections of society and from across Warwickshire. He stated that there were many residents who had been affected by crime and may make good officers but would not necessarily think of joining without Warwickshire Police reaching out to them.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he agreed that representation was a fundamental aspect of policing by consent. The Commissioner reported that Police Community Support Officers, Volunteers and Special Constables were representative of Warwickshire's BAME population. Around 5% of Police Officers were BAME which was less than Warwickshire as a whole but the Force was changing and becoming more diverse.

In response to the Chair, The Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that staff in charge of training new officers would be Warwickshire employees based in Leek Wootton.

Councillor Jefferson noted that in his budget The Police and Crime Commissioner had referred to the possibility of driving further efficiencies in partnership with West Mercia and asked the Commissioner to elaborate on what he meant by the comments given West Mercia's termination of the Strategic Alliance between the forces in October 2018.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that he believed that there had been areas of the Strategic Alliance from which further efficiency gains could have been made. The termination of the alliance had given Warwickshire Police the opportunity to rebuild itself as a more efficient and effective modern force. As part of the rebuilding process it was not yet known what collaboration would be taking place and with whom, the Force may retain some aspects of the Alliance in the form of future collaboration with West Mercia. The Commissioner stated that he expected to have a clearer picture of the form Warwickshire Police would take as a standalone force by April 2019.

Councillor Reilly stated that for residents of North Warwickshire District the key issues were the visibility and accessibility of local policing and the deployment of officers into the area. Councillor Reilly stated that while the consultation showed support for the £24 increase in the precept there was a clear message that residents expected to see investment in policing in North Warwickshire. Councillor Reilly asked if The Commissioner could provide the Panel with a plan of how the additional 85 officers would be allocated.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that it was not his role to allocate officers as that was an operational matter handled by the Chief Constable but assured Councillor Reilly that in conversations with the Chief Constable he had made it clear that he expected North Warwickshire to receive its fair share of the additional officers. The Commissioner also stated that he was aware that there were currently no response vehicles stationed in North Warwickshire and he had been making enquiries with the Force to see if it would be possible to station vehicles in the area.

Councillor Chattaway noted on the Police and Crime Commissioner's website the number of officers employed by Warwickshire Police in 2017/18 was given as 848. In a later post on the Commissioner's website the number of Officers was given as 804 and then for 2018/19 the number of Officers was given as 795. Councillor Chattaway asked the Commissioner to confirm that the additional 85 officers promised in his 2019/20 budget would be as an addition to the establishment figure.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the reporting of police officer numbers could be confusing to residents who may not be aware of the distinction between the actual number of officers and the establishment figure which included all current officers plus any vacancies. The Commissioner confirmed that the actual strength of Warwickshire Police as of the end of January 2019 was 790 officers with an establishment figure of 878. The Commissioner confirmed that the additional 85 officers would increase the establishment figure to 976. The Force would thus have to recruit 173 new officers in addition to recruiting to replace any officers leaving the Force. The Commissioner stated that over the last three months 17 officers had left the Force while 11 trained officers had transferred to Warwickshire from elsewhere in the country. The Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner clarified that there had been a difference between the budgeted establishment in 2017/18 and the actual officer posts as the Chief Constable had chosen to not fill 13 Detective Constable posts and to instead employ additional experienced Police Staff Investigators.

The Head of Media and Communications stated that he would review the figures which the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner published on their website to ensure that they were consistent. There would however always be some inconsistency in figures available to the public as several bodies measured force strength based on differing definitions and at different times.

Councillor Chattaway remained concerned that the Force would not be able to realise the increase in officer numbers which was the basis on which residents had supported a 12% increase in the precept.

Councillor Thompson asked if the Police and Crime Commissioner could confirm how the Chief Constable intended to allocate the additional 100 roles created in the 2019/20 budget.

The Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the Chief Constable's had provided a provisional allocation of the additional resources provided by a £24 increase;

- 40 officers into patrol
- 15 officers into locally based investigation teams (CID)
- Three digital media investigators in protective services
- Four Police Constables and one Sergeant to be deployed as a rural crime team
- Investment in the Harm Hub of one Inspector, two Adults in Need Coordinators and three Domestic Abuse Risk Managers
- Investment into neighbourhood policing of 5 officers and 5 PCSOs
- Investment of an additional Detective Sergeant and four officers in Child Sexual Exploitation Team
- Investment of additional eight officers into the offender management unit.
- Mainstreaming of ten temporary police staff investigators.

The Chief Executive stressed the point made by the Commissioner earlier in the meeting that the Force was in uncertain times and resource allocation may change to reflect changing circumstances. The Police and Crime Commissioner added that the Force had identified Kenilworth, Leamington Town Centre, Bedworth East, North Warwickshire East, and Rugby Rural Central as areas in need of additional neighbourhood policing resources.

Andy Davis asked the Police and Crime Commissioner to update the Panel on any work he had undertaken following the recommendation made to him by the Panel following consideration of the 2018/19 budget; that "the Commissioner puts a strong case to Government to press for fairer funding for Warwickshire Police".

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that he was a member of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and through the APCC's budget working group regular representations on the subject of the funding formula used to allocate police funding had been made both to the Home Office and the Treasury. The Commissioner stated that there looked to be the beginnings of a comprehensive spending review around police funding which he hoped would start in the coming year. The Commissioner stated that he had always argued that the current funding formula was unfair and disadvantaged rural forces like Warwickshire.

Bob Malloy stated that while the public consultation showed a clear desire for more resources to go into visible policing it was important that policing resources were allocated to the areas where there was the most need and the highest levels of harm and not necessarily dictated by public pressure. Bob Malloy stated that work the Force undertook addressing issues from Child Sexual Exploitation to Domestic Abuse and Cybercrime was often not visible to residents and victims of these crimes had not benefited from representative groups lobbying the Police and Crime Commissioner during the precept consultation.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the proposed budget for 2019/20 did include investment in services to protect the County's most vulnerable residents. Around £2.25 million in 2019/20 was forecast to be spent by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner directly on victim support and crime prevention programmes with third sector and other public sector partners. The Chief Constable had also stated his intention to invest in the Harm Hub and teams working on cases of Child Sexual Exploitation and domestic abuse. The Commissioner confirmed that the 2019/20 budget would not see any diminished funding for the areas of most need highlighted.

Councillor Reilly acknowledged the point made by Bob Malloy but stated that it should not diminish the clear concern raised in the precept consultation that the police should be more visible and more accessible. A more visible Force would act as a deterrent helping to prevent crime as well as making residents feel safer in their community. North Warwickshire had the highest rate of traffic accidents resulting in death or serious injury in the county and stationing response vehicles in the area would reduce response times helping to improve road safety.

The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the Force had invested in remote working which now allowed Officers to spend more time working out in the community rather than having to return to the office.

The Chair noted in the budget proposal a change of tone around the potential disposal of the Leek Wootton headquarters and asked if this represented a change in the Police and Crime Commissioners thinking about the site.

The Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that the marketing of the site was proceeding and he was expecting to receive the first expression of interest shortly and for more formal offers to be submitted by the end of March 2019.

In response to the Chair, The Treasurer to the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed the position remained the same as was reported in the minutes for the last meeting of the Budget Working Group there was an expectation that the Force would realise the majority of the £3.3 million of savings that had been identified in the 2018/19 budget.

The Chair noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia's budget proposal for 2019/20 stated that Warwickshire had withdrawn funding for alliance ICT projects. The Warwickshire budget however showed the force continuing to fund these projects. The Chair asked the Police and Crime Commissioner to clarify Warwickshire's position.

The Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner responded that the Commissioner and the Chief Constable's position had been that Warwickshire Police needed to do its due diligence in regards to all alliance projects before committing any further funds. The Chief Executive stated that in the last week he had been able to confirm that Warwickshire would be continuing to fund investment in the desktop technology and KCOM projects through the alliance programme.

Councillor Poole moved that the Police and Crime Panel accept the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed policing precept and budget for 2019/20.

Bob Malloy seconded the motion.

Councillor Poole provided an update to the Panel from the National Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels; as of 4 February 2019 25 Panels had voted to support increasing the police precept by 12%.

Councillor Chattaway stated that he understood why the Police and Crime had felt it necessary to propose a 12% increase in the police precept given the unacceptable burden the Government had placed on local council tax payers to provide police funding. Councillor Chattaway stated that he felt the Commissioner needed to accelerate the process of recruiting new officers and make it clear to the Chief Constable that by the end of 2019/20 residents expected to see a more visible and accessible Warwickshire Police as that is what they had agreed to pay for.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reiterated his previous comments that he shared the Panel's dissatisfaction with the current funding formula for local policing but he had a duty to set a legal budget within the set financial envelope.

Councillor Dirveiks stated that through the discussion it was clear that most Members were in agreement about the issues that needed to be raised in the Panel's response to the Commissioner's budget especially around the Government's funding formula not supporting rural forces to an adequate level.

Councillor Warwick stated that through their responses to the consultation residents had expressed support for a £24 increase in the precept providing an additional 100 officers and staff and in doing so residents had also provided direction to the Panel as to how they wished them to vote.

The Chair called a vote on the motion proposed by Councillor Poole which was accepted unanimously.

Resolved: That the Police and Crime Panel accepts the Police and Crime Commissioner's budget and precept proposal for 2019/20

The Police and Crime Panel's response to the Police and Crime Commissioner's budget is attached as appendix 2

4. Work Programme 2018-19

Councillor Jefferson suggested the Panel ask the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to produce a report on 'County Lines' to be brought to a future meeting given the high level of public interest.

Councillor Reilly stated that the Community Safety Partnerships which operated at a district and borough level were about to receive their strategic assessments which were the annual review of crime in the local areas. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner funded much of the work of the Partnerships through grants. Councillor Reilly stated that the Panel may be interested in examining how the Partnerships operate to ensure that they were properly supported by the district and borough council and were able to effectively use the funding allocated to them by the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that the Community Safety Partnerships were an important part of his work and he would welcome a review of how they were operating and ways in which they could be improved.

Resolved: The Work Programme was noted as tabled.

5. Dates of Meetings 2018-19

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

Thursday 14 March 2019
Thursday 20 June 2019
Thursday 19 September 2019
Thursday 21 November 2019

6. Any Urgent Items

None

Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

The Chair moved that, in light of the remaining items on the agenda, that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for item 12 on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Section 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Resolved

That the Police and Crime Panel meeting moves into private session.

7. Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 November 2018

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8. Complaints

The Panel was provided with an update.

The meeting rose at 12:22pm

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Chair