

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 22 March 2019

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Alan Webb	Warwickshire County Council
Nicola Davies (Chair)	Warwickshire County Council
Neil Dirveiks	Warwickshire County Council
Tony Jefferson	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Belinda Garcia	Rugby Borough Council
David Reilly	North Warwickshire Borough Council
June Tandy	Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council
Andrew Mobbs	Warwick District Council
Adrian Warwick	Warwickshire County Council

Independent Members

Andy Davis

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Neil Hewison	Chief Executive
David Patterson	Development and Policy lead (Performance and Scrutiny)
Philip Seccombe	Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Tipton	Head of Media and Communications
Abby Simkin	Development and Policy Lead (Commissioning, Grants and Engagement)
Chris Lewis	Development and Policy lead (Victims and Road Safety)

Warwickshire County Council Officers

Tom McColgan	Senior Democratic Services Manager
Jane Pollard	Legal Services Manager
Nichola Vine	Legal Services Manager

1. General

1) Apologies

Councillor Alan Webb was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Richard Chattaway. Councillor Andrew Mobbs was present as a substitute for Councillor Andrew Thompson. Councillor Belinda Garcia was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Derek Poole.

Councillor Mike Brain and Bob Malloy also sent their apologies.

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

There were none.

3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner had been co-opted onto Warwickshire County Council at the 19 March 2019 full council meeting and would be able to speak and vote on matters related to the Fire and Rescue service.

The Chair also informed the Panel that she had accepted a late paper on Domestic Abuse which had been provided by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

4) Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

The Chair stated that the Commissioner had been asked to provide an update on establishment numbers as part of his report at meetings going forward. The Chair also highlighted items that had been added to the work programme on the structure of Warwickshire Police post Strategic Alliance and the impact of the new rural crime team.

2. Public Question Time

There was no public involvement.

3. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner (The Commissioner) introduced the report. The Commissioner stated that council tax bills had been sent out of residents through the first half of March and his office had received a number of correspondences about the increased local policing precept. The Commissioner stated that he was convinced that the increase had been right thing to do for Warwickshire given how the Chief Constable intended to allocate the additional resources with the additional officers expected to be in place by the end of 2019.

The Commissioner stated that police numbers were growing rapidly and were at 805 as of the date of the meeting. The Force would have to adapt to the Policing Education Qualifications Framework which was being brought in nationally. Warwickshire Police had joined with three other regional forces to commission Staffordshire University to provide the new training courses.

The Commissioner confirmed that discussions were ongoing with West Mercia Police about what aspects of the alliance it may be beneficial to continue as joint projects after the Alliance ends in October 2019. The Commissioner was expecting to be able to confirm details about the structure of Warwickshire Police by May 2019.

In response to Andy Davis, the Commissioner stated that along with the Chief Constable he would inform officers and staff about the changes to Warwickshire Police before making a public statement sometime in the near future.

In response to Councillor Reilly, the Commissioner stated that the input from partners would be sought where services were expected to be jointly commissioned and the Commissioner had final sign off for any partnering arrangements made by the Force. Delete this sentence. The Commissioner stated that from April 2019 Local Policing would not be part of the alliance which accounted for 55% of the alliance and the Chief Constable had already confirmed that local policing would not be changing.

In response to Councillor Jefferson, the Commissioner stated that officers leaving the Force had been factored in to the recruitment projections. Despite having 150 vacancies, the Force would actually have to recruit in excess of 200 new officers to reach the increased establishment figure.

The Chair welcomed the road safety update included in the Commissioners report which showed progress was being made to allocate the funds generated by driver safety and speed awareness courses.

Police Performance

Councillor Reilly stated that the outcomes reported in the police performance report seemed to show a decline in performance. Positive outcomes were a fundamental element of crime reduction and safeguarding. Councillor Reilly asked the Commissioner how he could challenge the Chief Constable on outcomes.

The Commissioner responded that crime had increased without a corresponding increase in officers meaning the workload of each officer had increased. The Commissioner stressed that there was a mixed picture with outcomes in some categories increasing and some declining. The Commissioner also stated that his office directly commissioned victim support services to ensure that the maximum amount of support was in place. Neil Hewison added that the Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner would be carrying out a comprehensive investigation review of outcomes paying particular attention to crime relating to vulnerable victims when HM Inspector of Constabularies completed their review of Warwickshire Police.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner stated that he would share the outcome of the review and the response from Warwickshire Police with the Panel at the appropriate time.

Councillor Warwick noted that the Crown Prosecution Service were quoted in the Commissioner's report as blaming Athena for errors in cases passed to them by the Force. Councillor Warwick asked why the issues with the implementation of Athena were persisting.

The Commissioner responded that when he met officers Athena was always mentioned as an issue. In principle having a single software platform with investigation, intelligence, case and custody modules was the right solution but the implementation had been more difficult than initially anticipated and the 9 forces that make up the Athena Consortium had all reported similar difficulties. Warwickshire Police were investing in Athena Express which was simpler and easier to use. David Patterson added that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner produced a detailed report on Athena and the Force had taken the issues identified seriously to improve upon the current situation.

Councillor Jefferson stated that residents often reported that they had found it difficult to get through to the 101 service and noted that the 101 performance reported showed that while the total number of calls had fallen, the abandonment rate had increased.

The Commissioner responded that calls to the 101 services tended to vary by season with the number calls increasing in the summer and falling in the winter. The Commissioner stated that the Chief Constable recognised that the 999 and 101 services had not been good enough and was recruiting additional call centre staff. The initial focus had been on the 999 service which was now operating well with almost 95% of calls answered within 10 seconds. The focus was now turning to 101 and the Commissioner was hopeful performance would improve with the new call centre coming into use and allowing residents to make reports online. The Commissioner stated that the average time to answer a 101 non-emergency call was 55 seconds which still represented a good performance when compared nationally.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner stated that the calls coming through to the 101 services varied from residents reporting crimes or suspicious incidents to calls not about police matters or for any public services.

4. Consultation and Engagement Strategy Update

Neil Tipton introduced the report which highlighted how the Police and Crime Commissioner had engaged with residents throughout the year. Neil Tipton stated that the previous 12 months had presented some unusual challenges with the unexpected ending of the Strategic Alliance and a vacant deputy commissioner post who it had been anticipated would have had a role in engaging with residents.

Councillor Reilly welcomed the Commissioners commitment to engagement and had always found the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to be very accessible and visible.

Andy Davis stated that while the report clearly demonstrated the breadth of engagement carried out by the Commissioner it would be useful to see what outcomes there had been and what the Commissioner and residents felt had been achieved through the engagement.

The Commissioner responded that he was looking to improve the level of feedback he collected including attendance, what questions were asked and any suggestions that had been made. The Commissioner also stated that most issues raised were generally local issues and not county/nationwide.

In response to Andy Davis, the Commissioner stated that while he was mindful of the resources required to operate a citizens panel he felt the potential benefits outweighed the costs.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner stated that he was very aware that there were organisations that ought to have had a higher profile than they did and the Commissioner was always seeking to reach out to minority groups, victims of crime and any other groups who would benefit from some reassurance. Police and Crime Commissioners had only been established six years ago and there was still some work to do to inform residents about the role.

Additional Report on Domestic Abuse

David Patterson introduced the report which was written to increase the profile of domestic abuse and to demonstrate the steps Warwickshire Police were taking to improve their performance to what was a complex area.

In response to Councillor Mobbs, the Commissioner stated that the new officers would be allocated to areas where there was the most need. The Commissioner emphasised the complex nature of domestic abuse where there was a lot of repeat victimisation and victims were often reluctant to report crimes and participate in court hearings. The Commissioner stated that victims increasingly felt able to report offences and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner supported 'Crime Stoppers' which enabled crimes to be reported confidentially.

Councillor Jefferson stated that through his work chairing domestic homicide reviews in South Warwickshire he had seen first-hand the complexity of domestic abuse cases and paid tribute to the high standard of the police reports which he had seen.

The Commissioner felt that society at large did not have a good understanding of domestic violence and this needed to improve for agencies to develop a more effective response.

The Chair stated that it was important to build on the increased confidence of victims to report crimes by ensuring that outcomes improved, a lack of positive outcomes would discourage victims from coming forward.

The Commissioner responded that he felt in that past victims had felt that they would not be listened to or believed and a lot of work had been done to overcome this initial hurdle. The Commissioner agreed that the Force needed to improve outcomes to continue to encourage victims to come forward. Neil Hewison added that the 12% rise in domestic abuse seen in Warwickshire mirrored a 23% rise nationally. Neil Hewison stated that while arrest rates were not where they should be it was an improving picture and feedback from victims showed that 93% would recommend contacting the police.

5. Report of the Planning and Performance Working Group

The Chair presented the report and stated that the Planning and Performance Group were considering topics for future deep dive scrutiny exercises. The Chair stated that the Group would be mindful of the Panel's remit and the potential demand on the resources of the Office of the Police and Crime when selecting topics for a deep dive.

The Commissioner stated that he welcomed outside scrutiny of his office's work and that he was happy to support the Panel in carry it out as it was part of their role.

Resolved

That the Panel notes the draft minutes of the Planning and Performance Working Group meeting held on 11 February 2019.

6. Work Programme

Councillor Reilly suggested that a report on the Strategic Alliance be added to the agenda for the September meeting as the Alliance was due to end in early October.

Resolved: The Work Programme was noted as tabled.

7. Dates of Meetings 2018-19

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

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

8. Any Urgent Items

None

9. 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.

10. Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 February 2019

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. Complaints

The Panel was provided with an update.

The meeting rose at 15:30 pm

.....
Chair