

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Date: Thursday 10 February 2022
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

Membership

Councillor David Reilly (Chair)
Councillor Derek Poole
Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Ian Davison
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Clare Golby
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Dave Humphreys
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Andy Davis
Andrew Davies

Items on the agenda: -

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting
Resolved:

3 - 8

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

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Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 10 February 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor David Reilly (Chair) (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Andy Davis (Independent Member)
Councillor Ian Davison (Warwick District Council)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Marian Humphreys (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Christopher Kettle (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Sue Markham (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)

Officers

John Cole, Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Team Lead Senior Solicitor, Planning & Litigation
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

Others Present

Sara Ansell, Treasurer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Dave Patterson, Assurance and Scrutiny Officer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Clare Golby and Councillor Dave Humphreys.
Councillor Sue Markham and Councillor Marian Humphreys were present as substitutes.
Apologies were also received from Councillor Barbara Brown and Councillor John Holland.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. Consideration of Revised Precept

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced his revised budget and precept increase of £9.75 for a Band D property in the 2022/23 financial year. He expressed disappointment that the Panel had resolved to veto his original proposal. However, he acknowledged the Panel's democratic right to do so.

The Commissioner acknowledged the Panel's concerns regarding affordability; these had been taken into consideration when producing the revised budget. However, he stated that it was important to ensure that the Chief Constable was provided with adequate resources to deliver effective and efficient policing. He advised that the original budget, and the revised iteration, had been determined following detailed discussions with the Chief Constable.

The Commissioner highlighted the benefits enabled by the budget. He stated that a balanced budget had been produced which supported improvements to services whilst recognising the financial pressures faced by householders. He would enact measures to secure value for money.

The Commissioner highlighted the challenging backdrop to setting of the budget; the Force had been substantially rebuilt following termination of the Alliance, ICT infrastructure had been extensively upgraded. The budget sought to consolidate on the progress made, ensuring that the Force was fit for the future.

The Commissioner reported that the Force had delivered savings of £4.8m in 2021/22. This was a substantial undertaking which had enabled a balanced budget to be set for 2022/23 which included a further £0.2m of savings. A further savings requirement of £3m over the next three years was indicated by the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP); the Chief Constable would undertake a review of the operating model to provide options to meet the budget gap.

The Commissioner advised that, since the Panel's meeting on 27 January 2022, final figures had been received from borough and district councils outlining surpluses on the council tax collection fund and details of the council tax base. He stated that earlier projections from billing authorities had proved to be inaccurate; there was an additional £424,000 to add to the budget for 2022/23. He stated that, in future, borough and district councils would be asked to provide more accurate estimates as early as possible.

The Commissioner stated that the extra money was welcomed, but it did not change the requirements set out within the originally proposed budget. However, there was scope to reduce the amount expected from individual taxpayers towards service improvements. He advised that the

reduced precept increase of £9.75 for a Band D property equated to a rise of 3.85%. This was among the lowest rates nationally for policing.

The Commissioner provided a summary of the anticipated additional benefits facilitated by the budget. He advised that some of the extra money from the improved funding position would be utilised to appoint five additional Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), with an aspiration to deploy them at urban locations in support of the 'Safer Streets' initiative. He advised that an additional £50,000 would be diverted to the PCC Grant Scheme to support victim services. A new Green Fund would benefit from £200,000 to accelerate sustainability work in response to climate change.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner and his Team for providing the revised budget.

In response to Councillor Davison, Sara Ansell (Treasurer, OPCC) advised that, had the entirety of additional funding been diverted to offset council tax contributions, the precept increase could have been reduced by approximately £2 for a Band D property. However, she advised that collection fund surplus money was a one-off payment; it would be a poor financial planning decision to reduce the precept increase by this amount on this basis.

In response to Councillor Davison, the Commissioner advised that the original budget had made provision for sustainability work; however, the additional funding of £200,000 would enable sustainability to be treated as a higher priority.

In response to Councillor Davison, the Commissioner stated that recruitment of Evidential Review Officers was not a cost-saving initiative, but rather an intervention to improve criminal justice outcomes. He advised that investigative procedures had grown in complexity, there were areas where oversights could result in detrimental outcomes.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive) commented that the work of the Panel's Performance Framework Task and Finish Group would provide scope to monitor the benefits conferred by investment across police services.

Councillor Kettle stated that the Panel's decision to veto the precept proposal was partly based on the impact of higher taxation on residents who were already contending with rising costs of living. He stated that it was fortunate that additional funding had become available. However, the revised budget showed increased spending in several areas; it would have been preferable for this money to be used more extensively to offset the burden on taxpayers. He asked how investment would lead to improved effectiveness and efficiency.

The Commissioner stated that the increased council tax base showed that the policing requirement for Warwickshire had expanded. The Police had a duty to protect and respond; this was reflected within the budget. He advised that between years, the council tax collection fund could go up and down; additional revenue could not be diverted to ongoing projects. This was why investment in the Grant Scheme and Green Fund had been prioritised.

Sara Ansell stated that the savings requirement of £3m indicated by the MTFP was based on a precept level of £9.99. This was a stretching target for the Force following the £4.8m of savings delivered in 2021/22 and the £200,000 of efficiency savings targeted in 2022/23. The reduced precept amount increased the requirement for savings over the medium term. As council tax

surplus money was a one-off payment, it would be a poor financial planning decision to allocate additional funding in its entirety to offsetting of the precept increase.

In response to Councillor Kettle, the Commissioner advised that switch-on of the new ICT system had been successful. It had been a substantial undertaking. He advised that it was planned to relocate Control Room facilities to Stuart Ross House later in 2022, dependent upon third party providers.

Councillor Kettle highlighted that the precept amount per capita in Warwickshire was among the highest across England and Wales. However, there was a higher number of officers per person within neighbouring policing areas where the precept amount per capita was lower. He asked how councillors could justify these circumstances to taxpayers.

The Commissioner commented that these figures demonstrated the urgent need for a fairer funding formula to be determined. The ratio between government funding and council tax revenue was not consistent across policing areas. It was hoped that the Police Funding Formula Review would redress the balance. He emphasised that since 2016, Warwickshire Police had been the second lowest increaser of council tax nationally.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that investment in ICT was likely to deliver savings across the organisation. More robust ICT systems and the ability to hold meetings virtually facilitated homeworking, this would reduce fuel costs. He would seek evidence from the Force to demonstrate how improved ICT had resulted in measurable efficiencies.

Polly Reed advised that the Evolve Programme had focused on the transformation of Warwickshire Police as a standalone force following termination of the Alliance. This would be superseded by the Empower Programme with a focus on technology, people, and place. It would seek to examine the benefits of investment in ICT.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that the savings target of £200,000 for 2022/23 had been set in recognition of the challenges faced by the organisation to deliver £4.8m in savings in 2021/22. The Force had emerged as a more resilient organisation; it was not proposed to set a savings target for 2022/23 that would result in a need to make far-reaching cuts.

In response to Councillor Poole, the Commissioner stated that the Chief Constable had made a strong case for the appointment of Evidential Review Officers. It was considered that the initiative would improve the experience of victims of crime and raise standards. He highlighted the complexities of modern policing, including cybercrime, fraud, and a national shortage of detectives. Evidential Review Officers would play an important role whilst new detectives were being trained. He advised that the Chief Constable had offered to give a briefing to Panel members at Leek Wootton Police Headquarters at a convenient time to provide an overview of recent developments.

In response to Andy Davis, the Commissioner advised that, in 2016, a proposal to refresh the Police Funding Formula had emerged. The revised terms would have been favourable to Warwickshire; however, it was not progressed by government. He stated that the existing terms, set in 2008, were outdated and disadvantaged Warwickshire. He would advocate for a revised Formula that was fairer.

In response to Councillor Kettle, the Commissioner advised that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had undertaken a Financial Management Capability Review to assess the financial resilience and sustainability of Warwickshire Police. The report had been published in July 2020 and discussed at a recent Joint Audit and Standards Committee meeting. It could be shared with the Panel, if required.

The Chair stated that the Panel had an option to 'note' the Commissioner's revised precept; however, he moved that the Panel progress to a vote to accept or reject the revised precept. Councillor Poole seconded the motion which was agreed by the majority of those present.

The Chair called a vote. He sought a verdict from Panel members on whether to accept or reject the revised precept of £9.75 for a Band D property in the 2022/23 financial year.

There were seven votes in favour of accepting the revised precept.

There were no votes in favour of rejecting the revised precept.

There were three abstentions.

It was determined that, once the PCC had responded formally to the Panel's letter of 3 February 2022, a letter would be sent to confirm that the Panel accepted the revised precept.

The Police and Crime Commissioner's letter of 14 February 2022 is appended to these minutes alongside the letter in response from the Police and Crime Panel (17 February 2022) and the Commissioner's letter of 18 February 2022.

Resolved:

That the Police and Crime Panel accepts the Police and Crime Commissioner's revised precept of £9.75 for a Band D property for 2022/23.

3. Dates of Meetings

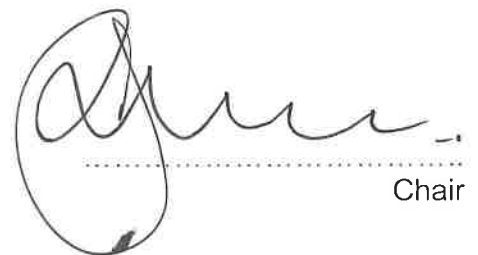
Future meeting dates were noted.

4. Any Urgent Items

There were none.

The meeting rose at 15:26.

7/4/22


Chair

