

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 18 March 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Councillor David Reilly (Chair)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Ian Davison
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Maggie O'Rourke
Councillor Christopher Watkins
Councillor Andrew Wright
Andrew Davies

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Philip Seccombe, Police & Crime Commissioner
Sara Ansell, Treasurer
Richard Long, Vulnerability and Health Policy Lead
David Patterson, Development and Policy Lead - Performance
Polly Reed, Chief Executive
Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications

Officers

Deborah Moseley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jane Pollard, Legal Advisor
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

Guests

John Anderson, Chair of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee

1. General

The Chair noted that the Panel's Legal Advisor, Jane Pollard, would be retiring in the near future and this would be her last meeting. He extended the Panel's thanks for her valued contribution and wished her a happy retirement. Ms Pollard noted she had enjoyed her time working with the Panel.

The Chair also noted that there were County Council elections taking place in May and he extended best wishes to the County's nominated representatives.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Nicola Davies and Mr Andy Davis.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillors David Reilly, Derek Poole and Christopher Kettle declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 2 "Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner" as Chairs and Vice Chair respectively on the local district Community Safety Partnerships (CSP).

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented his report to the Panel which provided an update on his activities since the last report on 19 November 2020. The report focussed on protocols around the upcoming PCC election, Chief Constable recruitment, increase to force establishment, crime rates, holding to account activity including performance scrutiny of deep dive topics, delivery of forensic services in collaboration with West Midlands Police, personnel at the OPCC, commissioner's grant scheme, National Probation Service dynamic framework, recommencement of drug testing on arrest, and engagement activity including arrangements to manage the impact of Covid-19, the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, Blue Light Commercial Ltd, and the Nuneaton and Bedworth External Oversight and Scrutiny Panel. A short financial summary was appended to the report, ahead of the Budget Working Group meeting scheduled for 25 March.

Since publication of the report, the Home Office had published the consultation results and recommendations following part 1 of its review into the role of the PCC. The second part of the consultation would be launched post-election and it was understood that this would include a consultation on the mandatory take-over of fire and rescue services.

Following a question from Councillor Ian Davison on the PCC's response to actions around the introduction of 20mph zones around schools as raised at the November meeting, the PCC noted that decisions of this type were made by the County Council. However, he considered that there was some demand for the introduction of speed limits and if a consultation arose, he would lend his support for implementation at locations where speeding traffic was a problem outside schools.

Members expressed some concern at the timing of the Chief Constable's retirement, particularly in light of the forthcoming PCC elections, and expressed a desire for smooth transition. In response, the PCC advised that Chief Constable Jolley had now served 33 years in policing, with six of those years in the Chief Constable role, which was longer than average. The PCC had had some

previous informal discussions about the retirement but it had not been appropriate to take any action or discuss the possibility more widely until notice had been received in writing on 10 February. It was also relevant to say that it had not been expected that the elections would go ahead this year in light of the pandemic. The PCC agreed that the transition and handover needed to be smooth, and his Chief Executive, Polly Reed, advised that the recruitment process had been designed around the election period to limit delays to appointing a new Chief Constable. The Panel would also be required to hold a Confirmation Hearing. Although there was no certainty it was hoped the preferred candidate would be in post by 1 July, the PCC had been reassured that there were given of succession plans that incorporated a stable and experienced chief officer team. The Panel noted the key leadership role the PCC and Chief Constable held in driving forward a number of projects, not least the post-alliance transition, and welcomed ongoing dialogue from the Chief Executive regarding continuity plans.

In response to questions from Councillor Maggie O'Rourke regarding drug and knife crime in Rugby, the PCC advised that there had been a specific spike in this type of crime in Rugby hence the operation that had taken place there. He agreed that there was an argument for local councillors to be briefed at a meeting of their choice. Following on from this point, Councillor Derek Poole commented on the need for improved information-sharing with the CSP and whilst the PCC noted that there were sometimes issues of operational sensitivity, he encouraged a close relationship with the Inspectors in the local geographical area and felt it was useful for them to be co-opted to the relevant CSP. The Chair noted frustrations around the influence of the district CSPs and suggested that this was something to be considered by the PCC post-election.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley noted recent police activity in Stratford-upon-Avon in relation to anti-social behaviour and drugs and expressed her thanks whilst querying if this type of offence was consistently occurring across the County. The PCC noted that drugs was a high priority for all CSPs in the area and there had been some successes in policing these crime types.

In response to a question from Mr Andrew Davies about backlogs in the Court system, the PCC noted this was a national problem. Locally, he attended the Criminal Justice Board and at a national level there was dialogue between PCCs and the Ministry of Justice and the Secretary of State for Justice, Mr Robert Buckland. The pandemic had hit the Court Service hard and there were ongoing difficulties as a result of the restrictions which the Service had to manage, but the Justice Centre in Leamington was now open and Magistrate Court cases were being heard in Coventry.

In response to a question from Mr Andrew Davies on rape cases and convictions, the PCC noted that this was not a simple issue and it was a crime where witnesses and victims did not always come forward. It was not an easy task to make a case that the Criminal Prosecution Service would support and it was also difficult to obtain a conviction. More information was available in the Performance Report at minute number 9. Richard Long, Vulnerability and Health Policy Lead, affirmed that rape and serious sexual offences were a national concern and there was a drive both nationally and locally to resolve the inherent difficulties described by the PCC. Locally, the OPCC work closely as an integral member of the county Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Board, which provides strategic oversight to this thematic area of work. Recently the OPCC successfully petitioned the VAWG Board to constitute a new Steering Group to specifically fill a gap in providing direction and coordination of partnership activity in relation to rape and serious sexual offences and support for victims and survivors. This Steering Group will operate as a sub-group to the Board and has met twice so far to draft terms of reference. The PCC added

that rape cases had reduced during the pandemic and he would continue to push partners on this issue. Mr Davies asked that focus remain on the delays in the Courts and for more data to be available in future on rape convictions.

The Chair noted that the PCC's report referred to the reinstatement of drug testing on arrest and asked if the PCC had been aware of the initial decision to stop this activity. The PCC clarified that the cessation had been due to the restrictions in place around the pandemic and challenges of holding individuals in custody during the lockdown. Polly Reed noted that one of the OPCC's Policy Officers had conducted some specific work on this issue and more information on this could be shared outside the meeting.

The PCC's report also introduced the Joint Audit and Standards Committee's (JASC) Annual Report which Mr John Anderson was invited to present. Mr Anderson noted the difficult working arrangements that the JASC had been working with due to the pandemic but that there had been a number of briefings taking place outside formal meetings which had led to this comprehensive report.

In response to questions from Councillor Christopher Kettle about the role of the JASC in monitoring financial performance, Mr Anderson said that there was rigorous monitoring in this area through regular items on the agenda together with external and internal audit reports. Sara Ansell, Treasurer, confirmed her understanding that, after sharing a copy of the JASC's terms of reference, with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel that there was no duplication in the remit of the Committee and that of the Panel's Budget Working Group. The Chair thanked Mr Anderson for his attendance and approach to working with the Panel. Mr Anderson and the Chair agreed it would be useful to meet to discuss how the two bodies were working and how joint working arrangements could be further developed.

With regard to the financial report appended to the PCC's report, Councillor Kettle commented on the use of reserves and requested that future reports include a table of expenses for the quarter and the outturn position. This would help to demonstrate performance alongside the provided commentary and assist the Panel and Working Group in their reflection on changes over time.

In response to Councillor Kettle's comments, Sara Ansell, Treasurer, noted the high attrition rate of reserves to fund the transformation into a standalone force (for which a £10.5m settlement had been received). The reserve strategy was produced and reviewed annually in line with CIPFA guidance and was available on the OPCC website for consideration. John Anderson added that this strategy was reviewed by the JASC which was satisfied there was a balanced budget going forward. Sara Ansell, Treasurer, noted that this was the first time the PCC's report had included a financial appendix and welcomed comments that would assist the development of the report in the future in a way that would serve the Panel's needs. The Chair thanked Sara Ansell, Treasurer, for the work she had put into preparing the new appendix.

3. Re-Appointment of Independent Member to the Police and Crime Panel

This report was presented to the Panel by Deborah Moseley, Senior Democratic Services Officer. Legislation required the Panel to appoint two independent members with a term of office of four years. One of the Panel's current members, Mr Andy Davis, was approaching the end of his four year term and had expressed a wish to be reappointed. The Panel had the choice of either reappointing Mr Davis for a further four year term or entering into a recruitment process to appoint

a new independent member. For clarity, it was confirmed that the tenure of the Panel's second independent member, Mr Andrew Davies, was not due for review until 2024.

The Chair proposed that Mr Andy Davis be reappointed to the Panel and this was seconded by Councillor Derek Poole who noted his wholehearted support for an attentive member who had made a valuable contribution to the work of the Panel. Upon being put to the vote, the proposal to reappoint Mr Davis was unanimously supported.

Resolved

That Mr Andy Davis be reappointed to the Panel for a further term of four years.

4. Refresh of the Membership of the Working Groups

The Panel were asked to consider the appointments to the Panel's two working groups, in particular the appointment of Councillor Christopher Kettle to the Budget Working Group and Mr Andrew Davies to the Planning and Performance Working Group.

Resolved

That the appointments to the Working Groups be as follows:-

Budget Working Group Planning & Performance Working Group

Councillor Peter Gilbert	Mr Andrew Davies
Councillor Christopher Kettle	Councillor Nicola Davies
Councillor Maggie O'Rourke	Mr Andy Davis
Councillor Derek Poole	Councillor David Reilly
Councillor David Reilly	

5. Work Programme

The work programme was noted. Members considered that the programme would need to be refreshed for the new municipal year and a number of items had been put forward for consideration for the full Panel and for delegation to the Planning and Performance Working Group:-

- 20mph speed limits around schools
- Rape and serious sexual offences (in terms of conviction rates)
- Delays in the Court Service
- Female representation within, and experience of, the force
- Diversity and Equalities
- Domestic Violence – including the impact and outcomes of the service changes in Warwickshire

6. Dates of Meetings

Future meeting dates were noted. Some Members keenly expressed a desire to return to face-to-face meetings and other Members asserted the benefits of virtual meetings. The importance of engaging with the communities in the districts of the County was highlighted. Members sought further information to be provided regarding the potential to hold hybrid meetings and requested that the opportunity to hold meetings outside Warwick be explored.

7. Any Urgent Items

None.

8. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

9. OPCC Performance Scrutiny

This report formed part of the Police and Crime Commissioner's report at minute number 2.

10. Complaints

None.