

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 17 November 2022

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members

Councillor Christopher Kettle (Chair) (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Barbara Brown (Vice Chair) (Warwickshire County Council)
Mr Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Mr Andy Davis (Independent Member)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Clare Golby (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor John Holland (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Dave Humphreys (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Ray Jarvis (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Derek Poole (Rugby Borough Council)

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Delivery Lead – Commercial and Regulatory
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

Others Present

David Carter, Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Emma Daniell, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, OPCC
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

1. General

The Chair stated that the Police and Crime Panel had recently held a training session, and members of the Panel had attended the Annual Conference for Police (Fire) and Crime Panels on 11 November 2022. These had proved to be informative and had underlined the importance of the Panel's role to scrutinise and support the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Panel recognised its role to act as a 'critical friend' to the PCC. He underlined the importance of mutual support between the Panel and Commissioner to achieve the best possible outcome for Warwickshire.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Ian Davison.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) requested an amendment to the minutes. She asked that the wording of the final paragraph on page 8 of the agenda pack, “the Commissioner advised that it would be possible to track the abstraction rate of recently graduated officers in the years ahead”, be redrafted to “the Commissioner advised that it would be possible to track the attrition rate of recently graduated officers in the years ahead”.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

There were no matters arising.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) presented his report which provided an update on key activities since the meeting of the Panel in September 2022. He advised that the format of the report had been updated to reflect the themes of the Police and Crime Plan, focusing on areas of longstanding interest to the Panel. He advised that the information relating to police officer lengths of service provided on page 16 of the agenda pack had been updated since publication of the report. The report advised that 51 officers had served for a period of less than one year. Following the latest intake, this figure was now 109 officers.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that the figures published within the report dated from March 2022. Since publication of the report, updated figures had become available. She advised that the most recent figures showed a total headcount number for Warwickshire Police of 1067 officers.

The Commissioner advised that, to date, over 1100 responses had been received to the Budget Consultation. This already surpassed the number of responses to the previous year’s survey. He encouraged members to utilise their community networks to promote the consultation.

The Commissioner expressed confidence that refinements to governance arrangements had led to a robust framework for holding to account of the Chief Constable. Weekly meetings were supplemented by a monthly Governance and Performance Board (GPB) meeting attended by senior officers with a focus on a specific topic for enhanced scrutiny.

The Commissioner reported that the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Daniell, had acclimatised well to the role and had taken a close interest in the work of Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) as well as other important initiatives.

Councillor Holland highlighted coverage in the report of the findings of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its recent PEEL (Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy) inspection of Warwickshire Police. He stated that the Inspectorate's findings had been disappointing; a detailed recovery plan was required. He asked if budgetary constraints had contributed to underperformance in specific areas.

The Commissioner stated that effective use of available resources would be required to address the areas identified by the Inspectorate as requiring improvement. He stated that the findings of HMICFRS had been disappointing. However, he emphasised the importance of accepting the evaluation of an independent organisation. The Inspectorate had recognised the challenges associated with establishing Warwickshire Police as a standalone force following the termination of the Strategic Alliance with West Mercia Police. The findings of the Inspectorate had been examined in detail with the Chief Constable. The Force recognised that improvements were required. He stated that the organisational restructuring of Warwickshire Police would provide a means to address many of the points raised by HMICFRS. For example, additional resources would be allocated to investigating crime.

Councillor Holland suggested that a systematic approach be adopted to address individual points raised by the Inspectorate and ensure that responsibility for required improvements could be allocated to specific personnel. He highlighted the Panel's willingness to support the PCC to achieve an improvement.

The Commissioner advised that an analytical, systematic approach would be taken to secure the required improvements. He stated that the Inspectorate's findings would enable him to be better informed when holding the Force to account. He reported that six police forces in England had been placed under 'special measures' by HMICFRS. Warwickshire Police was not among these, which did not excuse the shortcomings identified within the report but showed that the Force was 'in the middle of the pack'.

The Commissioner highlighted the challenges associated with establishing Warwickshire Police as a standalone force, including the development of new purpose-built teams, some of which had been identified by HMICFRS as requiring improvement. He stated that, in some areas, officers lacked experience. He would continue to support the provision of high-quality training across the organisation. He stated that there was a willingness by senior officers to improve the quality of services. There was good evidence of improvements being made; however, there was much to be done and he would continue to hold the Force to account.

Polly Reed advised that the Force had been asked to produce an Action Plan identifying areas where improvements would be made. This would be benchmarked against analysis undertaken by the OPCC following the 2018 PEEL Assessment.

Councillor Brown expressed support for the continued recruitment of new officers. However, she sought the Commissioner's assurance that the arrangements in place for monitoring and mentoring of new officers were sustainable and did not place an undue burden on more experienced officers.

Polly Reed advised that the training requirements of new recruits were closely monitored by the OPCC. The provision of structured support by experienced officers was a priority recognised by the Chief Constable. The scale of this task was an important element of workforce planning

activities undertaken by Warwickshire Police, in common with other police forces regionally that offered a degree apprenticeship programme.

The Commissioner stated that the target to achieve a total Force establishment of 1100 officers by the end of March 2023 was challenging. He would continue to support the Chief Constable to achieve this objective. He highlighted the challenges affecting recruitment across the public sector. As a result, there were staffing vacancies within the Force. He stated that recruitment was a priority, and this was regularly discussed with the Chief Constable. Warwickshire Police had succeeded in attracting a good number of transferees from forces elsewhere. This, alongside securing full attendance of courses, would help the Force to reach its target by the end of March 2023. Failure to do so would result in a financial penalty by government. He underlined the importance of robust vetting procedures to ensure that the Force did not appoint unsuitable individuals.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Force was adequately funded to achieve its recruitment targets. Engagement with the public suggested that there was support for expanding the Force and a willingness by Warwickshire residents to contribute to this objective by means of the policing precept. The Budget Consultation was ongoing; he advised that the findings of the survey would provide a clearer idea of what residents viewed as a fair level of council tax, taking account of policing requirements.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that 1100 officers had been budgeted for in 2022/23. At present, the Force employed 1067 officers which meant that there was an underspend in this area. Staff vacancies meant that there was also an underspend for staffing costs; however, it had been necessary to employ agency staff in key areas which incurred some additional expenditure. He highlighted the current challenges in the labour market which impacted across the public sector. He emphasised that it was the Chief Constable's responsibility to determine how money was spent within an agreed framework. This was regularly monitored and scrutinised.

Andrew Davies highlighted the good progress made by the Force to disrupt County Lines activity and address the harms caused by organised crime groups. He asked that the Panel's appreciation be passed on to the Chief Constable.

Andy Davis highlighted concerns raised by HMICFRS in respect of the performance of the 101 Service. This followed analysis by the Planning and Performance Working Group which had prompted some concerns. He requested an update on the progress of the Gold Group Scrutiny Review into performance of the 101 Service.

The Commissioner emphasised the importance of the 101 Service. He advised that the Chief Constable had allocated additional resources to the Control Room. He accepted that the performance of the 101 Service was inadequate. This was partly due to the requirement for Warwickshire Police to periodically accept a significant number of calls on behalf of other regional forces that were experiencing exceptionally high call demand or technical difficulties.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) advised that the Deputy Chief Constable had undertaken an assessment of regional levels of demand on the 101 Service and how demand could be managed effectively. A leaflet had been delivered to Warwickshire residents to publicise other methods of reporting crime. An answerphone message had also been provided to notify callers of other options to contact the police during exceptionally busy periods.

In response to Councillor Golby, the DPCC advised that the Force was in the process of examining data to determine the impact that handling of other police forces' non-emergency calls had on call waiting times for Warwickshire residents. This required detailed analysis. However, it was clear that when demand exceeded 2000 calls, the capability to respond within the targeted response time was lost.

Polly Reed commented that the Panel's visit to the Operations Communication Centre at Stuart Ross House in January 2023 would provide an opportunity for focused questioning of the Chief Constable in respect of the 101 Service.

In response to Councillor Golby, the Commissioner advised that servicing of 101 systems was undertaken nationally. Poor 101 performance was a problem affecting police forces across England and Wales. Collectively, police and crime commissioners had raised their concerns to service providers. He expressed his determination to reach an improvement. This would be supported by additional staff in the Control Room, as well as upgrades to the system.

Andy Davis advised that the Planning and Performance Working Group would maintain its focus on performance of the 101 Service. At its recent meeting, there had been discussion of drawing on the expertise of individuals with knowledge of call-handling processes elsewhere, including in the private sector, to facilitate an improvement.

Councillor Fradgley stated that Safer Neighbourhood Teams had emphasised a strong preference for residents to report incidents directly to Warwickshire Police, rather than making use of social media to voice concerns. Efforts had been made to direct residents to email the Force. However, by encouraging residents to report incidents, it was possible that demand for the 101 Service would increase.

The Commissioner highlighted the benefits of the Single Online Home service which provided an online resource to be used at residents' convenience. He suggested that Single Online Home be promoted for reporting of non-urgent incidents. He emphasised that the 999 Service was treated as a priority and that 999 calls were being responded to promptly.

Councillor Golby stated that the Single Online Home platform could be improved by allowing more space for free text, enabling residents to describe the nature of an incident more fully. Additionally, there was no option to report anonymously which could deter some individuals from contacting the Force.

In summary, the Chair stated that the Panel had some concerns in relation to the HMICFRS PEEL Assessment of Warwickshire Police which showed that the Force had made limited progress in its capacity to investigate crimes since its last inspection in 2018. He requested that, in his next report to the Panel, the Commissioner provide detail of how he proposed to challenge the Chief Constable to address shortcomings in this area. In respect of the 101 Service, he requested that the Commissioner continue to work closely with the Chief Constable to reach an improvement. Regarding officer numbers, he emphasised the importance of achieving the targeted officer headcount number within the available time. The Panel would be grateful of assurance that robust plans were in place to recruit and retain officers.

The Commissioner provided an outline of measures in place to secure the required number of additional officers. He expressed support for the Panel's scrutiny of investigation of crimes. He would brief the Chief Constable of the Panel's concerns.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that his Office was currently engaged in a procurement exercise for commissioned services. He would provide a summary to the Panel at a future meeting. He emphasised that there was a high number of applicants meaning that a rigorous selection process was required.

Polly Reed advised that the OPCC would hold a Grant Fund Launch event on 5 December 2022. She encouraged members to utilise their community networks to promote the event, enabling a dialogue with organisations that could help to support delivery of Police and Crime Plan objectives. She advised that an update could be provided to the Panel of the effectiveness of existing grant allocations.

The Chair indicated that an update would be welcomed by the Panel. He asked that attention be given to post-funding scenarios for organisations that were coming to the end of a funding period, taking account of financial constraints affecting local authorities.

The Commissioner offered to provide an update to the Panel itemising local authority posts that were funded by his Office, stating that a significant amount of grant funding was allocated to council partnership initiatives. He suggested that a separate report to the Panel outlining arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) would be beneficial. He emphasised the importance of enabling CSPs to exercise judgement to allocate funding to local concerns, making use of local knowledge. He recognised the financial pressures faced by local authorities but emphasised the importance of partnership working to achieve the best possible outcome.

The Chair stated that a report outlining arrangements for CSPs would be welcomed. This would provide assurance to CSPs that funding of borough and district council posts would continue. He highlighted the recently published crime statistics that had been provided to CSPs showing high rates of crime in specific areas. This had been a cause of concern; he suggested that the matter be explored at a future meeting.

3. Reports of the Working Groups

Planning and Performance Working Group

Andy Davis provided an update of the recent meeting of the Planning and Performance Working Group. In its analysis of performance, the Group had continued to focus on the four priority areas of rape, domestic abuse, 101 communications, and total crime outcomes. Attention had also been given to training arrangements for student officers and national trends in this area. He advised that consideration had been given to levels of consistency in the support offered to the four Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). It was apparent that experiences differed across CSPs, including levels of engagement by partnership organisations. It was agreed that the OPCC would convene a meeting of the four CSP chairs to examine areas of common interest, share good practice, and achieve improved consistency.

Andy Davis reported that consideration had been given to the effectiveness of new approaches by Warwickshire Police to address County Lines. This had been well received. Attention had also

been given to the resourcing implications of continued high levels of Public Order offences. Future meetings would focus on the recommendations emerging from the PEEL (Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy) inspection of Warwickshire Police.

Andy Davis stated that the Group had welcomed the update from the OPCC outlining plans for the Police and Crime Plan Performance Framework initiative. Good progress had been made and it was considered that the Framework would provide a valuable tool for ongoing scrutiny. At its meeting in March 2023, the Group would focus on approaches by the Commissioner and his Office to statistical analysis, including how data was used to hold the Force to account.

Budget Working Group

The Chair provided an update of monitoring undertaken by the Budget Working Group. He emphasised the importance of accounting methodologies which enabled expenditure to be monitored on a month-by-month basis. This would enable an improved awareness of what costs would be incurred during the remaining months of the financial year and allow any burgeoning problems to be swiftly detected and resolved.

The Police and Crime Commissioner provided assurance that expenditure was being closely monitored. A monthly summary of expenditure and income was provided by Warwickshire Police. This was supplemented by a monthly finance meeting with the Force which examined the accounts five weeks in arrears. He advised that the OPCC followed guidelines recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). The methodology followed by the OPCC was consistent with practices utilised by local authorities in Warwickshire and other police forces in England and Wales. He commented that the approach proposed by the Budget Working Group presented certain benefits; however, it was more labour-intensive and hiring additional staff for this purpose would not be a good use of public money.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that the outlook for setting of the budget for 2023/24 depended upon the quantum of the national funding settlement and the amount that taxpayers in Warwickshire were prepared to contribute. He stated that his pledge to the electorate was to increase the number of police officers in Warwickshire to the highest affordable level. When setting the budget, he would seek to ensure that the taxpayer received value for money.

4. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

No issues were raised by the CSPs.

5. Work Programme

The Panel noted the Work Programme. It was resolved that:

- A future Update Report from Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) would include a commentary of proposals, and measures already in place, to improve the environmental sustainability of Warwickshire Police and lower emissions.
- An invitation would be made to the Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee (WJASC) to present its Annual Governance Statement at the meeting in April 2023.

- Liaison with the OPCC would take place following the meeting to review scheduling options for consideration of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) by the Panel.
- That the Panel would seek the view of the Chief Constable in respect of Vetting in January 2023 ahead of consideration of this issue by the Planning and Performance Working Group.
- That the Planning and Performance Working Group would undertake a scoping exercise to determine the Panel's approach to scrutiny of the PCC's holding to account of the Force for delivery of measures to address Domestic Abuse, alongside an evaluation of PCC-funded projects in this area.

6. Dates of Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of the future meetings.

7. Any Urgent Items

There were 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 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. Exempt Minutes

Resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

10. Complaints

None.

The meeting rose at 16:18.

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Chair