

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Monday 5 February 2024

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members

Andy Davis (Chair) (Independent Member)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)
Councillor Margaret Bell (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Barbara Brown (Warwickshire County Council)
Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Natalie Gist (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Clare Golby (Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor Ray Jarvis (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Jim Sinnott (Warwick District Council)

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Senior Solicitor – Delivery Lead, Commercial and Regulatory
Andrew Harper, Head of Strategic Finance
Virginia Rennie, Director of Finance

Others Present

Sara Ansell, Treasurer, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Emma Daniell, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire
Andy Heath, Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Humphreys. Councillor Margaret Bell was present as a substitute.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There was none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillor Jarvis highlighted that page 3 of the minutes included the statement that “in respect of police officer numbers, the Commissioner advised that the latest figures showed that the Force now had 1,127 officers”, whereas the Commissioner’s Budget proposals provided for a total of 1,125 officers. He asked if the figure provided at the previous meeting was accurate.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) advised that this information was accurate, stating that the total number of officers fluctuated according to the number of officers leaving or joining the Force each month. The current number of officers was 1,122.

Councillor Poole highlighted discussion of funding arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) at the previous meeting. Commentary on page 7 of the minutes stated that “a revised arrangement ... was under consideration which would allocate funding more equitably”. He proposed that an item be added to the Panel’s Work Programme to examine funding plans for CSPs in more detail. He suggested that this be given attention at the meeting in June 2024. The Chair expressed support for this proposal which was agreed.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

The Chair highlighted that the Panel had received several expressions of concern relating to the activities of the Warwickshire Hunt which followed on from public speaking on this matter at previous meetings. It continued to be an area of concern to the Panel.

2. Budget 2024/25

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) presented his proposed Budget for Warwickshire Police, including a proposed increase of £13.00 (4.7%) in the local policing precept for an average Band D property (and equivalent percentage increase for other bands) for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Commissioner stated that detailed attention had been given to formulating a budget which provided the Chief Constable with the resources needed to protect Warwickshire communities whilst demonstrating an awareness of what was affordable for residents. He emphasised that the Budget came against a backdrop of rising costs of living. However, there were signs of economic improvement. Inflation had slightly eased but remained high. This meant that costs continued to increase; funding which had been adequate to cover costs and deliver improvements in the current financial year would not meet projected future costs. Whilst there had been some increase in funding from central government, this alone would not bridge the gap. Therefore, following consultation with the Chief Constable, savings of approximately £1.2m had been identified for the 2024/25 financial year, alongside ongoing savings for successive years.

The Commissioner provided details of the public consultation on the Budget. In Autumn 2023, a range of engagement activities had been used to capture a broad consensus view of Warwickshire

residents. Activities encompassed online surveys, face-to-face events, and analysis of data to develop an understanding of public concerns and priorities. These had found that the principal areas of concern for residents were anti-social behaviour (ASB), burglary, acquisitive crime, and organised crime. Warwickshire Police had also commissioned a telephone survey which had identified similar concerns.

The Commissioner advised that the consultation had found that most residents supported an increase in funding and would prioritise this over any cuts to public services. Some responses had called for improved government funding for policing. There had also been some concerns about the impact on residents of any increase to the precept. However, national research showed that there was majority support for increased funding for public services, even if it meant increased taxation.

The Commissioner outlined the benefits of his proposed Budget, including:

- Recruitment of an additional 10 police officers in 2024/25.
- Enhanced visibility of policing enabled by town centre officers in the main towns of each borough and district.
- Strengthened capacity for specialist investigation teams to address the harms caused by child abuse, trafficking, and exploitation.
- Increased investment in infrastructure, including estates, vehicles, and uniforms to provide an improved working environment for officers and staff in support of organisational objectives.
- Further improvements to call-handling processes with a focus on managing demand for 101 non-emergency calls.
- Ringfenced funding of £1m to address ASB 'hotspots' across Warwickshire.
- The allocation of £2.8m to commissioning of victim support services, including enhanced services for victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse.
- Investment of £375,000 to deliver a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator programme to prevent harm and reduce reoffending.
- New contracts for substance misuse support services targeted at those within or on the fringes of the criminal justice system with the aim of breaking the cycle of reoffending.
- Continuation of the Grant Scheme through the allocation of approximately £300,000 focused on prevention of crime and diversionary activities, as well as road safety initiatives.
- Allocation of £175,000 to Community Safety Partnerships (with £30,000 provided to each CSP and an additional £25,000 for joint initiatives).
- Additional Home Office funding (secured in partnership with Warwickshire local authorities) of £310,000 to address serious violence and £355,000 to deliver the Safer Streets initiative.

The Commissioner stated that his proposal was for a net revenue budget of £133.144m. It included an increase in the policing precept of 4.7% which equated to an additional 25p per week for an average Band D property. He highlighted that approximately 60% of householders in Warwickshire were within Band C or lower. They would pay proportionately less.

The Commissioner stated that the total budget would deliver improved engagement and visibility of Warwickshire Police; an increase in proactive policing and prevention activities; improved victim care and a victim-centred focus for investigation of crimes; increases in the number of criminals brought to justice (with a focus on retail crime, vehicle theft, and burglary); a focus on ASB by both

police and partner organisations; and an improved health and wellbeing offer for officers and staff. He sought the Panel's support.

In response to Councillor Sinnott, the Commissioner advised that data, metrics, and performance indicators were regularly reviewed. Information was provided by Warwickshire Police on a quarterly basis and utilised to question the Chief Constable on the Force's progress, including areas which required additional attention.

Councillor Bell stated that, based on the information supplied within the Commissioner's report, there was evidence that residents would support an increase in the precept so long as it would be possible to "witness tangible improvements in the services delivered". However, performance data was required to quantify levels of improvement. This was absent from the report. She highlighted commentary in the report that Warwickshire Police's new operating model was "continuing to embed, with tangible benefits already being seen, including an increase in detection rates". The report referred to other areas where improvements had been made, such as the 101 Service. However, it was not possible to make a judgement on improvements to services without data to show baseline levels and targets giving a clear idea of how investment would lead to improved performance. This was needed to provide assurance to taxpayers that the increase in the precept was warranted.

The Commissioner emphasised that his role was to provide funding to the Chief Constable to secure effective operational policing. He highlighted areas where performance could not easily be measured such as visibility of policing, which was a key concern for residents. The proposed introduction of town centre officers would support better visibility of policing. There had been increased attendance by officers of town and parish council meetings which improved community engagement and accountability. He highlighted that a measurable improvement had been seen in the performance of the 101 Service. Over the past 15 months, the average waiting time for a 101 call had reduced from around five minutes to less than one minute. This had been achieved by investment in the Operations and Communications Centre in response to residents' concerns. He stated that the new geographically based policing model had instated a Chief Inspector at each of the area command centres whose specific job was to engage with communities and local councillors. This also supported a focus on engagement.

Councillor Brown stated that the Panel's analysis required an understanding of enhancements to existing services facilitated by the proposed budget. She suggested that the Panel's Planning and Performance Working Group undertake detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis. For example, where funding was allocated to prevention work or measures to address ASB, it would be helpful to examine key performance indicators showing tangible outcomes that had been enabled by an increase in the precept. She accepted that there were areas where performance improvements were difficult to measure. Attention could be given by the Group to approaches in these areas. She emphasised the importance of being able to establish a direct link between any increase in council tax to improved outcomes in specific areas.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) stated that good progress had been made to improve outcomes across service areas. For example, there had been national recognition of the Force's approach to address increased retail crime. Positive action had been taken in 43.7% of shop theft investigation cases, this was a considerable achievement.

The Chair highlighted the complexity of performance monitoring which encompassed a range of different performance matrixes and indicators. A selective approach would be required to derive an indicative overview of performance. He expressed support for the Planning and Performance Working Group to work with the OPCC with a focus on performance across specific areas of community concern, such as tackling ASB. This approach would help the Panel to develop an understanding of the positive outcomes facilitated by the Budget.

The Commissioner expressed support for this proposal. He advised that the terms of the recently awarded Home Office grant funding to tackle ASB had not yet been announced. Once this information was available, he would liaise with community safety teams to identify ASB 'hotspots' where interventions would be targeted. There was a strong will by the Force and its partners to address the problem of ASB in communities.

The Commissioner highlighted that some police forces had resolved to move police officers into staff roles as a cost saving measure. He was strongly opposed to any such arrangement in Warwickshire.

The Chair highlighted that the 'Your Police, Your Views' consultation had attracted fewer responses from residents in the north of the County. Demographic information showed that the highest proportion of responses had been received from the '65 or older' age group. He sought the Commissioner's view of measures that could be taken to broaden engagement in the consultation in future.

The Commissioner stated that efforts were made to engage with a wide range of communities and age groups; however, it was impossible to force people to respond. Social media and on-line events were utilised to broaden participation, as well as face-to-face meetings and other non-digital options. The telephone survey commissioned by Warwickshire Police had consulted with a representative sample of Warwickshire communities across geographical areas and social economic groups. Encouragingly, its findings were very similar to the 'Your Police, Your Views' consultation.

The Commissioner advised that efforts were made to identify the number of responses to the consultation received from police officers and staff. He stated that, as Warwickshire taxpayers, it was right for them to be included. In most cases, the responses received from officers and staff were in keeping with sentiments expressed by the public more generally.

In response to Councillor Sinnott, the Commissioner advised that funding had been allocated to Prevention initiatives delivered by Warwickshire Police as well as by commissioned and grant-funded services. The Force's Prevention Hub also supported work in this area. He acknowledged that a baseline metric of performance would support an understanding of the effectiveness of investment in Prevention work. However, it was an area where performance could not easily be measured – prevention of crime was a focus for every police officer and routinely supported by staff and partnership organisations.

Andrew Davies stated that it was a sustainable budget and praised the good progress that had been made over recent years to secure the Force's finances. He highlighted that the findings of the consultation showed that visibility of policing was a key area of community concern. He acknowledged that the changing profile of crime placed additional demands on policing. However,

he asked if the importance placed by residents on visible policing was recognised by Warwickshire Police.

The Commissioner stated that visibility of policing was a frequently raised concern. In many cases, it was felt that visible policing would prevent and deter crime. It also served to allay the fear of crime and provide reassurance to the public. The matter was frequently discussed with the Chief Constable. He emphasised that the Chief Constable had a responsibility to keep Warwickshire safe and to utilise resources effectively and efficiently. He highlighted the changing profile of crime which encompassed cybercrime, fraud, serious organised crime, and other areas of criminality which required a specialist response. Investment in these areas was vital to secure public safety. However, visible policing was a recognised priority. It was not possible to entirely resolve concerns in this area, but the increased number of police officers would lead to better visibility in communities, including the additional town centre officers provided for within the Budget.

The DPCC advised that an Engagement Strategy was being developed by Warwickshire Police which would examine issues associated with visible policing alongside provision of services to promote public engagement. These encompassed availability of officers at police stations and resolution centres, community safety wardens (which formed part of the Safer Streets initiative), improvements to call-handling arrangements, and use of social media.

The Chair highlighted that the consultation on the Budget provided valuable insight into public priorities for policing. He asked how the data captured during the consultation could be used throughout the year to inform the direction of the Force as well as work by the Commissioner and his office.

The Commissioner advised that responses to the consultation were analysed in detail, including free text comments. This information had been utilised to shape the focus on ASB, burglary, acquisitive crime, and organised crime. The usefulness of the consultation was not limited to development of the budget; it would be looked at throughout the year.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) highlighted that following the PCC elections in May 2024 attention would be given to development of the next Police and Crime Plan. Information captured by recent engagement, including the 'Your Police, Your Views' consultation, would be utilised to inform an understanding of public priorities for policing.

The Chair highlighted the importance of effective media and communications by the Force to better publicise the good progress made by both recent and new investment. This had been raised by the Panel at the recent visit to Leek Wootton Police Headquarters. He emphasised that, by sharing positive news stories, the Force could provide reassurance that increases to the precept had led to tangible improvements in service delivery and productivity.

The Chair summarised the key points of the Panel's analysis. He proposed that the Panel's formal response to the Commissioner include recommendations that:

- Progress in achieving the outlined improvements to services be monitored and reported on over the coming year, including details of increased productivity, efficiency, and measurable improvement.

- The Panel's Planning and Performance Working Group work with the OPCC to develop an approach to securing an indicative overview of performance across specific areas of community concern so that clearer visibility around progress can be reported to the public.
- Warwickshire Police be encouraged by the PCC to make wider use of comms and narrative reporting to better publicise recent good progress and successes. This would support taxpayers' understanding of how recent investment had led to tangible improvements in service delivery.

Contingent on these recommendations, the Chair called for a vote on support for the proposed precept for 2024/25 which was unanimously accepted by those present.

The Commissioner thanked the Panel for its detailed examination of the Budget and the 'critical friend' challenge and support it had provided over the past 12 months.

Resolved:

That the Police and Crime Panel accepts the Police and Crime Commissioner's budget and precept proposal for 2024/25.

The Police and Crime Panel's letter in response to the Commissioner's budget is attached as Appendix 1. The reply from the Commissioner is attached as Appendix 2.

3. Work Programme

It was resolved to add an item to the Work Programme to examine future funding arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships in more detail at the meeting in June 2024.

4. Dates of Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings.

5. Any Urgent Items

There was none.

6. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

As there were no complaints to consider, there was no requirement to enter confidential session.

7. Complaints

There was none.

The meeting rose at 14:52.

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Chair

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By email: philip.seccombe@warwickshire.police.uk
cc: Polly Reed (OPCC): polly.reed@warwickshire.police.uk

7 February 2024

Dear Mr Seccombe,

Warwickshire Policing Precept 2024/25

Thank you for presenting your budget proposals to the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 5 February 2024 and for addressing the broad range of questions posed by Panel members.

I write to confirm that members of the Panel present at the meeting voted unanimously in support of your proposal of an increase of £13.00 (4.7%) in the local policing precept for an average Band D property (and equivalent percentage increase for other bands) for the 2024/25 financial year.

The Panel supports your proposed increase with three specific recommendations:

Firstly, the Panel noted the proposed improvements to services, the productivity achievements conferred by the Budget, and the commitment to improved outcomes for victims of crime. In reaching a decision, the Panel gave detailed attention to the findings of recent public engagement and consultation on the Budget. Members were supportive of your view that “the majority of the public stands behind increased funding for police services, provided they witness tangible improvements in the services delivered.” At the meeting, the Panel emphasised the importance of taking steps to ensure that the improvements to services delivered by the increased precept will be more effectively communicated to taxpayers.

At the meeting, it was considered that the provision of more detailed performance data would have benefitted the Panel's analysis of the proposed Budget. Members noted that it was difficult to make a judgement on improvements to services without data showing baseline levels and targets, giving a clear idea of how investment would lead to improved performance. The Panel recommended that progress in achieving the outlined improvements to services be monitored and reported on over the coming year.

Secondly, the Panel recognises that some areas of performance are more readily measurable than others. For example, the commitment to achieve further improvements to 101 call-handling processes could be monitored by reference to call waiting times; whereas the objective to achieve enhanced visibility of policing would require broader analysis. It is also recognised that a selective approach will be required, rather than seeking to monitor and report on a complete range of performance matrixes and indicators. To derive an indicative overview of performance, the Panel's Planning and Performance Working Group will work with the OPCC Team to assist narrowing the focus to more specific areas of community concern (for example, tackling anti-social behaviour) where clearer visibility around progress can be reported to the public. The support of your Office in this endeavour would be highly valued by the Panel.

Thirdly, at the meeting, the Panel was keen to highlight the importance of effective media and communications by Warwickshire Police to better publicise the good progress made by the Force by both recent and new investment. This would support taxpayers' understanding of the effect of this increased precept and how it is leading to tangible improvements in service delivery, effectiveness, and productivity levels of Warwickshire Police. I would be grateful if you would raise this point with the Chief Constable.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to you and the Team at the OPCC for the collaborative approach to providing information and the detailed Budget Briefing provided to the Panel ahead of the meeting.

A copy of the minutes of the meeting of 5 February will be forwarded to you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Davis', written in a cursive style.

Mr Andy Davis
Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel Chair



16 February 2024

Mr Andrew Davis

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel Chair

By email: Warwickshire County Council Democratic Services

Dear Mr Davis,

Subject: Warwickshire Policing Precept 2024/25

Thank you for your letter of the 7 February 2024, regarding the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel's formal response to my proposal for the policing precept for 2024/25.

The precept was considered at the meeting of the Panel on 5 February 2024 and I wish to put on record my personal thanks to the members of the Panel for the scrutiny, challenge and support that they provided to me during this important democratic process; also, for their unanimous vote in support of my proposal for the increase in the precept. I do however note the three specific recommendations made by the Panel, as articulated in your letter.

My view is that these are reasonable and appropriate recommendations to ensure that the investment made by Warwickshire's taxpayers through the police precept translate into Warwickshire Police providing an improved service and that this improvement is objectively assessed, scrutinised, and effectively communicated.

In setting the budget, my aim is to provide Warwickshire Police with the resources necessary to keep communities safe, while ensuring value for money for taxpayers and delivering a balanced budget. It is therefore critical that there is close monitoring of expenditure and service delivery to ensure that the expected benefits are in fact realised. This will form an important part of my office's scrutiny work in the year ahead and I will continue to hold the force to account in delivering on these improvements.

As part of this, I welcome the suggested approach of the Panel's 'Planning and Performance Group' to focus on specific areas of community concern, to assist in the monitoring of progress. My office will work with you in developing this approach.

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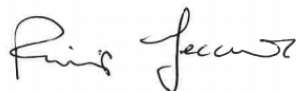
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I also fully agree with the points raised by the Panel on the importance of effective media and communications in aiding residents to understand the progress that is being made in delivering service improvements. As was highlighted in my budget report and detailed in your letter, it is critical that the public can see the tangible benefits that the budget delivers and I am keen to ensure this is the case.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I am committed to regular engagement and communication with residents. Having discussed your letter with the Chief Constable, I know that she is also fully supportive of ensuring that the good progress of the force and the outcomes of the investment from the budget are effectively communicated. I will continue to work closely with the force to ensure this is the case.

Lastly, thank you for noting the diligence and work of my team in providing the information and briefing ahead of the Panel meeting. Your comments are appreciated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Secombe'.

Philip Secombe TD

Police and Crime Commissioner