

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 21 November 2024

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Andy Davis (Chair), Independent Member
Councillor Claire Edwards, Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Natalie Gist, Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Dave Humphreys, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Tim Jenkins, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Warwickshire County Council

Officers

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Committee Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Delivery Lead Commercial & Regulatory
Lucy Adams, Team Lead Senior Solicitor Planning & Litigation

Others Present

Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Emma Daniell, Deputy Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

1. General

The Chair, Andy Davis, welcomed everyone to the meeting including new Members and visitors.

Andy Davis reflected on the political changes that had taken place in Rugby Borough Council and the resulting changes in membership of the Police and Crime Panel. He thanked Rugby Borough Councillor Derek Poole and Warwickshire County Councillor Barbara Brown for their work and commitment on the panel.

He noted that since joining the Panel in 2021, Councillor Brown had chaired the Planning and Performance Working Group and had helped members to engage robustly and scrutinise performance management.

Derek Poole had been a member of the Panel since its inception and had taken an active role on working groups and numerous task and finish groups. Andy Davis concluded that the experience and insights of both members would be missed.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Simpson-Vince and

Resolved that Councillor David Humphreys be appointed Vice-Chair of the Panel for the remaining municipal year.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Andrew Davies, Independent Member, Councillor Jim Sinnott of Warwick District Council, Councillor Ray Jarvis of North Warwickshire Borough Council and Andrew Harper, WCC Head of Strategic Finance.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 were agreed subject to an amendment to the wording 'Operation Resolve' on page 8.

(4) Public Speaking

Officers had received a request from Dr Denise Taylor to read two questions out to the Panel, as she was unable to attend the meeting in person. The questions were as follows:

- 1) What measures are the Police & Crime Panel taking to ensure that the independent investigation into the policing of the Warwickshire Hunt is truly impartial, given the documented affiliations of the PCC with pro-hunting organisations? Specifically, how will the panel address concerns about conflicts of interest and ensure that the findings are transparent, evidence-based, and fully shared with the public?
- 2) The Warwickshire Hunt continues to operate several times a week, engaging in illegal activities such as breaches of the Hunting Act, dangerous road use, and trespass. What actions are the panel taking to hold the PCC accountable for ensuring that the acting Chief Constable enforces the law effectively? How will the panel ensure that Warwickshire Police prioritise public safety and lawful policing of the hunt, and what measurable improvements will the public see as a result?

In response to Question 1, the Chair advised that in relation to the Independent Review, the Panel had no jurisdiction to interfere in the process. It had the Commissioner's decision to instruct a review and the Panel were not aware of any evidence that would show that the review was not being handled independently. Whilst the review may have finished, no findings had been reported. He noted that the Panel may hear more about where the final report was from the Commissioner in his update.

In response to Question 2, the Chair felt that the questions were very similar to those raised back in June 2024 by Dr Taylor and related to operational policing. He reminded Members

that operational matters did not fall within the Panel's remit and the Panel had no powers to instruct Warwickshire Police on how to allocate their resources or prioritise activities.

For clarification the Chair outlined the purpose of Police and Crime Panel, which was to challenge and support the Commissioner in the delivery of his duties. The Panel had a strategic role that included scrutinising the budget, the council tax precept, the police and crime plan and contributing to policy development.

The Chair then invited Ms Liz Pride, who was in attendance at the meeting to outline her questions. Ms Pride outlined her question as follows:

- What steps is the panel taking to ensure that the findings of the independent investigation, as well as the evidence reviewed and conclusions drawn, are made fully public? Given the history of complaints being dismissed or downplayed, how will the panel ensure that this investigation restores public confidence through genuine transparency and accountability?

In response, the Chair advised that the findings of the independent investigation would be made public but confirmation may be received from the Commissioner shortly as to when and how that would be done. In relation to the complaints referred to, these were dealt with on an individual basis and responded to, or referred on, as soon as possible. He explained that there was a process that had to be adhered to and where appropriate, the complaint would be considered fully, as members of the Sub-Group established last year may recall.

The Chair then asked Ms Pride if she had a follow up question, which she confirmed she did not. The Chair thanked her for attending and advised that she was welcome to stay for the remainder of the meeting if she wished.

3. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner addressed the Panel and prior to outlining his report, asked Polly Reed, Chief Executive of the OPCC to provide an update on the Independent Review into policing of the Warwickshire Hunt.

Polly Reed advised that the Commissioner had announced there would be an Independent Review prior to his reappointment as Police and Crime Commissioner. The approach had been determined to ensure the review was transparent and demonstrate that it was independent. A variety of organisations had been offered the opportunity to be part of the review and the independent reviewer had been working for a number of weeks now. A report was still awaited but the OPCC were mindful that it was not in their gift to advise him when to complete his work. It was hoped the report would be received in the next few weeks and it would then be published. The OPCC would be in contact with the Panel to advise on timescales in due course.

The Chair asked how it was planned to report the findings, bearing in mind the level of public interest in the matter. In response, Polly Reed confirmed that no date for publication had been finalised as yet but, once ready, a report would be made accessible to all previous interested parties and the Panel would receive a copy as soon as practicable.

The Commissioner referred to the Terms of Reference for the review, which the Panel had previously had sight of and reiterated that the OPCC were not in a position to demand timeframes of the reviewer.

The Commissioner went on to give an update on progress of the draft Police and Crime Plan, a report on which had been received back from the external consultants, TONIC. All feedback would be analysed and fed back into the plan and it was hoped that all Members had the chance to add their thoughts into the consultation which it was hoped would gather the collective thoughts of Warwickshire residents and communities.

The Chair asked if the Commissioner was content that the consultation had been ambitious and far further reaching than previous years, as he had hoped. The Commissioner gave assurances that OPCC officers had worked hard to ensure that the consultation was available on the internet and advertised widely, along with the work undertaken by research agency, TONIC.

Polly Reed added that since completing their consultation, feedback suggested that TONIC had succeeded in their brief, resulting in a good number of survey returns. A final report was due in the next week and work would start internally to review the information. Officers were aiming to share the work later in December.

The Chair recognised that a number of significant pieces of work were in the pipeline for consideration by the Panel. The Commissioner agreed, stating that the plan was a very important strategic document. He went on to provide an overview of the progress with the recruitment of a new Chief Constable, following the retirement of Debbie Tedds. Interviews were planned to be held on Friday 6 December and an announcement would be made on the successful candidate following the proposed confirmation hearing on 16 December.

The Commissioner highlighted the target of reducing fatalities and serious injuries by 50% by 2030. He reported that data indicated there had been a reduction of 20% in 2023 compared to the 2022 figures. This was as a result of the positive work and partnership working with WCC Highways, Highways England and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Updates were also given on Operation Resolve, the scheme implemented to reduce anti-social behaviour. There was concern, however, that future finance of the scheme was still unknown as the new administration in Government may choose not to repeat the funding.

In relation to Local Justice Outcomes, the Commissioner reported that there was still a backlog of cases but the local criminal justice board was in discussions to minimise the backlog and maximise the use of courts. This had been discussed in some detail at a recent summit of all Police & Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables in London and Warwickshire had offered their custody cells for use if required.

The window to apply for funding from the 2025/26 PCC Grants Scheme was due to close on 29 of November and the OPCC was keen to receive applications from those organisations providing support in Warwickshire. The Commissioner stated that he was keen to see applications from new organisations or charities that had not received funding in the past. This financial year, to date £175,000 had been made available to the county's Community Safety Partnerships, shared across projects spanning the local area.

The Commissioner went on to outline the current situation regarding the upcoming budget, advising that the level of precept was still unknown. Government announcements had indicated that there was money available but it was not known how this would be allocated. Whilst the pay increase for staff and officers had been covered, there were other pressures coming down the line, with pensions and building maintenance adding additional pressure.

Signposting Members to the report, the Commissioner spoke to Appendix A and the National Crime and Policing Measures for Quarter 2 of 2024/25. It was recognised that the figures fluctuated throughout the year but the Commissioner was pleased with the data relating to victim contact and support. In addition, Cyber Crime continued to add demand on all law enforcement agencies. More victims were comfortable reporting incidents and the Force had provided more resource to manage this, whilst continuing to work closely with regional and national partners such as Action Fraud.

Following a question from Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner explained that additional funding had not been received to cover the increased staff costs. Officers had been aware of the potential increase and had made provision for this in last year's budget by using an earmarked reserve.

Councillor Humphreys also asked for clarification on vacancies and how the overtime was budgeted for. The Commissioner explained that not many officers left part way through the year but

Councillor Simpson-Vince queried the rise in Cyber Crime and how this was reported or recorded, along with any indication of officer time involved. The Commissioner advised that he received regular reports, with financial scams referred to the national fraud team.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Daniell, explained that the Force was involved in prevention work, alongside some focus working with partners. The Cyber Resilience Board was mindful that cyber crime was rising and was a national threat.

The Chair asked the Commissioner to expand on the Governance and Scrutiny Board meeting held in September, which had focused on the topic of public trust and confidence. The Commissioner acknowledged that this was a big challenge to all police forces, with a high level of negative press over recent years. However, he felt that this was one of the most scrutinised public services, quite rightly, as it had the ability to remove an individual's liberty. The Commissioner was focused on ensuring that the Force did everything it could to bring criminals to justice and communicate effectively with communities. He noted that social media had changed the way all services operated and he was committed to ensuring the Force was transparent in its actions and behaviours. The vetting process for officers had been improved as a result of the Angiolini Inquiry and Warwickshire was carrying out contractor vetting for other forces.

The Chair asked if the Board was satisfied that enough was being done for the residents of Warwickshire. The Commissioner was confident that it was but reiterated that he and the Force were always looking to improve where possible.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted that call answering times had significantly improved, helping to increase trust and confidence, with investigations being completed more quickly and reducing the waiting time for outcomes.

Councillor Natalie Gist asked for more information on the narrative relating to Road Safety and “impressive results”. The Commissioner explained that three new speed vans had been purchased, along with average speed cameras in key areas in Stratford District. The Force worked closely with the Road Safety Team at the County Council and were keen to educate drivers and were using Operation Snap to collate evidence from helmet or dashboard cameras to assist with prosecutions.

Polly Reed provided statistics relating to the Councillor Gist’s query, advising that in the six-month trial period, 71 vehicles had been stopped, 38 vehicles seized, 13 arrests, 7 driver disqualifications, 35 no ins, 3 drugs received as well as weapons and immigration offences also discovered. Councillor Fradgley requested that this information be made public via the minutes of the meeting.

Councillor Jenkins also queried the Road Safety information, asking if the average speed cameras were being successfully rolled out. The Commissioner advised that some pilots were still waiting for connections to be made via National Grid but, if successful, he hoped to deliver more cameras in the County. Further discussions focused on Community Speed Watch teams, the evidence they gathered and how prosecutions could be made as a result. The Commissioner explained that he would like CSW teams to be able to issue fines but that would be dependent on the Government supporting the change.

In response to a question relating to using CSW teams in 20mph zones, the Commissioner explained that national legislation was not strong enough as yet, but road safety teams were looking into the issue.

The Chair recognised that there had been no real mention of police funding in the recent Chancellor’s budget and asked if the Commissioner had any further information. The Commissioner gave an overview of the core funding provided by the Home Office, the setting of a precept and the various pots of money for use on specific projects. He advised that there were three or four funding streams set to continue into 2025 to support victims of serious crime but the future was unknown. PCC’s were writing to the Home Secretary individually and collectively to express concern about the detrimental impact if funding was lost.

Councillor Claire Edwards asked the Commissioner to comment on the narrative in the report relating to Organised Crime, in particular shoplifting to order. The Commissioner agreed that this covered so many areas of crime including shoplifting and car theft. He referred to 7.1 b) of the report which stated that in September 2024 there had been 141 approved disruptions of organised crime groups in the County. Warwickshire worked closely with neighbouring larger Forces and the Organised Crime unit. This area of crime was a constant thorn in the side of communities, with worrying numbers of individuals involved but a lot of work was being put into gathering intelligence to enable Forces to disrupt the criminal activity.

Emma Daniell provided further information on national discussions, OPAL and Safer Business Action Week. Warwickshire had five Town Centre Officers who engaged with retail owners, particularly where there was a history of shoplifting, however, there were a lot of reasons why individuals committed this crime. The OPCC was keen to use education as well as enforcing the law to deter shop lifting occurrences.

Councillor Jenkins asked the Commissioner about the significant increase in burglary figures from Quarter 2, which had increased by 29% from the previous quarter. The Commissioner acknowledged that it could be a reflection of seasonal change or because of the drive of Police to attend burglary reports. In Warwickshire, 100% of burglary reports had been attended in September 2024 resulting in an increased confidence in people that action would be taken. However, he agreed to respond with further information after the meeting.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for his report and the Panel for their active participation.

4. Update on the Draft Police and Crime Plan

The draft Police and Crime Plan had been discussed at length in the previous agenda item and the Chair reflected on the important role of the Panel in scrutinising any future plan. He suggested that an extra meeting of the Panel may need to be organised for January 2025 to ensure that an appropriate level of focus was given to the emerging plan, as the February meeting was set aside for agreeing the Budget precept.

The Commissioner proposed inviting the successful candidate for the Chief Constable position to future meetings and it was noted that further arrangements for this could be made after the Confirmation Hearing on 16 December 2024.

5. Re-appointment of Independent Member to the Police and Crime Panel

The Chair outlined the report which explained that the current Independent Member, Andrew Davies was approaching the end of his first four-year term on the Panel. Following enquiries, he had confirmed his desire to stay on for a further term.

It was proposed by Councillor Jenny Fradgley, seconded by Councillor Tim Jenkins and

Resolved

That Andrew Davies be reappointed as Independent Member of the Police and Crime Panel for a further period of four years.

6. Appointment to the Planning and Performance Working Group 2024/25

The Chair addressed the Panel and reminded them that following the political changes that had taken place in Rugby Borough Council, this had impacted on the Panel's membership. In turn, this had resulted in a vacancy on the Planning and Performance Working Group.

The Chair, therefore, asked for a volunteer to join the working group and he gave an overview of the work they considered. Unfortunately, a volunteer was not forthcoming. It was, therefore,

Resolved

That this item be carried forward to the next meeting.

7. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

The Panel's Support Officer confirmed that no issues had been raised by the Community Safety Partnerships prior to the meeting.

8. Work Programme

Having considered the work programme, the Panel agreed that the additional meetings relating to the Confirmation of a new Chief Constable be added, along with an update to the timings for consideration of the draft Police and Crime Plan.

9. Dates of Meetings

The future meeting dates were noted.

10. Any Urgent Items

The Commissioner asked for confirmation of how many Chairs of the various Community Safety Partnerships were members of the Panel. He was keen to ensure that the lines of communication were used productively. It was noted that the Panel did have a senior representative on all of the County's CSP's.

11. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

There were none.

12. Complaints

There were none to report.

The meeting rose at 3.10pm

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Chair