

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 26 September 2024

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Andy Davis (Chair) (Independent Member)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice-Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)
Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Natalie Gist (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Dave Humphreys (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Ray Jarvis (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Tim Jenkins (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Jim Sinnott (Warwick District Council)

Officers

Amy Bridgewater-Carnall, Senior Committee Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Delivery Lead Commercial & Regulatory
Lucy Adams, Team Lead Senior Solicitor Planning & Litigation
Andrew Harper, Head of Strategic Finance

Others Present

Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Emma Daniell, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Claire Morris, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Tipton, Office of the Police and Crime Panel
David Carter, Joint Audit and Standards Committee

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Warwickshire County Councillor, Barbara Brown, Warwick District Councillor, Jim Sinnott and Polly Reed, Chief Executive OPCC.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June and 24 June 2024 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Chair, Mr Andy Davis, referred to page 5 of the 20 June minutes which detailed the public speaker's questions raised in relation to the Warwickshire Hunt. He asked the Commissioner if there was any update on the upcoming Independent Review. The Commissioner advised that an Independent Reviewer had been appointed and was currently reviewing the Terms of Reference. He provided some background on the reviewer's previous employment history and experience undertaking similar reviews. In addition, the Commissioner advised that the individual had passed the police vetting process that day and it was hoped to start the review imminently. It was agreed that a copy of the Terms of Reference would be shared with the Panel Members.

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to view the Terms of Reference and extended the Panel's offer of help should the reviewer wish to speak to them. It was noted that the outcome of the review would be reported to the Panel prior to it being made publicly available.

(4) Public Speaking

There had been no requests for public speaking at this meeting.

2. Police and Crime Commissioner's Report

The Panel received a report updating them on key activities since the last meeting on 20 June 2024. Activities of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) were included.

The Commissioner addressed the meeting and highlighted the following areas of work:

- Volunteers for independent custody visitors, numbers were gradually building with more in Leamington than in the north of the County – the volunteers' objective was to ensure that detainees were being treated properly;
- Operation Resolve was underway to deal with Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), with funding from the Home Office totalling £1 million. The Force had taken on most of the work with Warwick District amongst the areas being given focus. Officers were working alongside Town Centre Wardens and Rangers and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams;
- The Operation Resolve funding was one of a number of grants that the Commissioner recognised may come to an end in March 2025, with Forces across the country waiting for the Autumn budget announcements.

In relation to Criminal Justice, the Commissioner referred to the backlog of cases in the crown court and recent meetings to discuss the potential release of early prisoners due to overcrowding. Warwickshire had released fifteen prisoners, which was likely to rise to mid-twenties the following month. The Commissioner was mindful that this process would impact on victims and others who were concerned about safety measures.

The Joint Audit and Standards Committee held recently had been well attended and the Force were close to signing off their 2023/24 accounts.

The Commissioner also updated the meeting on the recent pay award, noting that information relating to staff pay was still awaited. He assured that funds were available in the pay reserve to meet the shortfall.

Finally, the Commissioner referred to the performance data looked at by the Policy and Performance working group the previous week. He assured the meeting that he was holding the Chief Constable to account in those areas where improvement was needed and was challenging performance robustly.

In relation to the overcrowding issue, Councillor Derek Poole asked if the Commissioner knew of any instructions from a higher authority, asking officers not to arrest for certain crimes. The Commissioner advised that he was not aware of any such direction.

Mr Andrew Davies thanked the Commissioner for his update and referred to recent media reports that some prisoners had been released in error or without electronic tags. He asked if there was any information on similar cases in Warwickshire and what measures were being taken to ensure these incidents did not happen again.

The Commissioner advised that were few residents affected in Warwickshire and he was not aware of any such incidents occurring at Rugby or Redditch facilities. He advised that he met with Warwickshire Probation Service regularly.

In response to a question asking for his top concerns, the Commissioner felt that, in terms of the criminal justice system, the backlog of cases was having a serious impact, with justice being delayed for victims. This was of particular concern when it related to serious sexual or domestic violence crimes, with victims questioning whether to continue pursuing the case due to the length of time it was taking. The Commissioner also spoke about the Nuneaton Justice Centre which only considered family and civil cases, not criminal trials. He advised that he was pressing His Majesty's Court Service to change this, as this would relieve pressure on the Leamington courts.

The Chair agreed with this point and hoped to receive a response back as soon as possible.

Councillor Tim Jenkins expressed his gratitude for the positive response in Nuneaton relating to the recent disorder and rioting, which had escalated via social media but had been acted on swiftly by the Force. The Commissioner highlighted that a number of officers had been redeployed temporarily to assist and the Force had responded well.

Councillor Dave Humphreys raised a concern about the visibility of Safer Neighbourhood Teams, with some having officers extracted to work elsewhere and asked for clarity on the impact on Warwickshire. The Commissioner reminded him that resourcing was in the Chief Constables gift, however, he gave an overview of the minimum and maximum extraction. He agreed to raise this as a local concern.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley spoke about 20mph speed limit zones in her area, with residents anxious to form Community Speedwatch Teams. However, she alleged they had been advised not to as the police were not able to enforce the 20mph speed and offenders would not be

prosecuted. She asked for further information as to how this could be managed and how residents could feel empowered. The Commissioner acknowledged that enforcement was a problem, and this had been raised with him at the recent partnership event. He advised that discussions were ongoing with the Road Safety Partnership and he would update the Panel at the next meeting on progress.

Councillor Ray Jarvis referred to school crossing patrol people being equipped with body worn camera's, with recent instances of the footage being shared with the Police to prosecute drivers for motoring offences. He asked if there were plans to supply cameras to all crossing wardens. The Commissioner explained that the cameras were part of a County Council scheme and, whilst he was supportive, he encouraged Members to speak to their Council colleagues.

The Chair asked for an update on Operation Resolve, the programme to help tackle anti-social behaviour. The Commissioner explained the slight delay to the process but gave assurance that the Force was on course to utilise the funding by the end of the year. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Daniell, addressed the meeting and described her experience of going out with the patrols and being stopped by the public expressing their appreciation at seeing officers out and about. The patrols appeared to be having a positive effect in many communities.

Claire Morris, Head of Business Services and Assurance, supported this statement, advising that the August data showed a decrease in crime of 23% in those areas with an increased confidence within the public to report ASB.

Councillor Jenkins reflected on his experiences meeting with the trustees of the Bedworth Alms houses, and the extent of challenges across the borough. The Commissioner felt that a partnership response was the best way forward and encouraged Councillors to engage in discussions with the town centre officers and the Inspectors in charge of the affected areas, who were keen to meet with local members.

Following similar experiences expressed by Councillor Fradgley in relation to Stratford upon Avon, the Commissioner reiterated that Operation Resolve did increase visibility and seemed to be having a positive impact in communities. The reasons for incidents of ASB were discussed including education, schools, parents and youth culture. Members noted that an update on the programme would be provided at future meetings.

The Chair referenced the Duty to Collaborate and queried the Commissioner's intentions. The Commissioner explained that this related to the Victims Prisoners Act which was wide ranging but further detail was awaited via a statutory instrument. This covered a number of topics and currently, there was a victims code that all agencies should be signed up to in Warwickshire which may need updating and the PCC would be expected to collaborate on commissioned services and how they linked in. The Chair noted the OPCC was waiting for further detail and requested updates to future meetings.

The Chair referred to two recent 'Holding to Account' meetings which had covered 'Warwickshire Police Culture' and 'Public Trust and Confidence' and asked for the Commissioner's reflections. The Commissioner gave an overview of some of the areas of discussion and explained the reasons that both the Force and the OPCC needed to make sure that workforce culture was correct and relevant and adjusted where necessary. He felt that strong leadership would then lead towards improving public trust and confidence in the Police. In addition, the need to recruit the

right people to the Force and ensure vetting was secure was discussed, with the Commissioner acknowledging there was always room for improvement.

In relation to Communication and Engagement, Councillor Fradgley asked why there had been no Warwickshire Police presence at the recent LGBT Leamington Pride event. The Commissioner advised that he was disappointed not to have been invited and an incident the night before had diverted resources to ensure an appropriate police response was present.

The Commissioner went on to discuss commissioned services, many of which were funded by the OPCC and boosted by government funding. As yet there was no indication from government about future funding plans. However, the importance of the support provided by the organisations was not to be underestimated and the range of services on offer was outlined.

Andrew Davies continued the discussion on finances, thanking the Commissioner for the update on the pay award and asked him for his thoughts on the future. The Commissioner was conscious that the change of government may impact and inflation could continue to fall, however, the pressure on public services, local authorities, prisons and the Fire Service would likely continue for some time.

Following a question from Andrew Davies, the Commissioner agreed that he would like to 'grow' his own officers as long as it was affordable. He noted that Warwickshire was one of the smallest forces in the country and had hit a new record with 1140 new recruits.

The Chair acknowledged the work taking place to prepare for the budget setting early next year and thanked the Commissioner for offering to allow the Panel to have sight of early monitoring reports. It had been agreed the Councillor Derek Poole would be meeting with the Chief Finance Officer at the OPCC to help the Panel build their understanding of the position.

The Chair also noted that the OPCC were now working with a new external auditor, Azets, rather than Grant Thornton. It was recognised that the move had been a positive one and had been overseen by the Joint Audit and Standards Committee. The Panel were mindful that national rates for auditing services had increased substantially, and it was hoped that the increased fees would result in a better service.

The report was noted.

3. Appointments to the Planning and Performance Working Group

The Panel received a report advising them of the appointments made to the Planning and Performance Working Group. Membership for 2024/25 was confirmed as:

- Councillor Barbara Brown, Warwickshire County Council
- Mr Andrew Davies, Independent Member
- Councillor David Humphreys, Warwickshire County Council
- Councillor Jim Sinnott, Warwick District Council

The report was noted.

4. Report of the Planning and Performance Working Group

The Panel received a report detailing the items covered by the Planning and Performance Working Group meeting held on 9 July 2024. Councillor Dave Humphreys provided a verbal update on the most recent meeting held on 19 September 2024.

Councillor Humphreys provided further detail on the groups' discussions relating to Performance, PCC Commissioned Services – Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence support services and the Police & Crime Plan Consultation.

Councillor Humphreys also queried if it was possible to be provided with further breakdown details in relation to 999 and 101 calls. He advised that the working group had recognised the improvements in the service but were disappointed that data seem to show that response times had dipped. Claire Morris asked for clarification on what information the group wanted as a different request had been made at the working group meeting. Councillor Humphreys confirmed that he would like to see more detail on the breakdown of 101 & 99 calls as well as response times.

The Commissioner reiterated the importance of emergency call handling as the 'front door' of the organisation. He gave an overview of the recent improvements made to training, the call back facility and the triage system. In addition, he expanded on the training provided to officers responding to domestic abuse incidents. The Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner, supported this statement and gave assurance that this area of work was monitored regularly to try and continue to bolster trust and confidence. It was agreed that a visit to the control room would be beneficial for newer Panel members.

Claire Morris advised that the Chief Constable had chosen to put victim satisfaction rates and targets in for the organisation, which covered five category areas. This included domestic abuse victim satisfaction and the August data pack had demonstrated that the satisfaction rate had exceeded the target at 82%. This was as a result of the improvements at the OCC in relation to fielding and managing calls.

Councillor Natalie Gist advised that feedback from residents in her area suggested that 101 callers were experiencing 30 to 40 minutes on hold. Claire Morris advised that Warwickshire's figures did not reflect that and showed that the response times for calls were one of the best in the country. However, she encouraged Panel members to provide further detail where possible as experiences of long hold times were looked into as individual cases. Claire Morris went on to explain that the 101 service averaged 1500 calls a month and an increase in numbers of the summer months was expected. The average median call time was recorded at 15 minutes.

The Panel went on to look at the progress of consultation on the Police and Crime Plan for 2024/25. The Chair queried how representative the consultation was. Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications OPCC, outlined the process from engaging TONIC, a leading research agency, with experience of working in Warwickshire over 17 years. He detailed the strong links across the County, with Local Authorities and service providers which it was hoped would deliver a sample that was representative of the County. Work was ongoing to ensure a balance of online and paper-based responses, and work continued to recognise any gaps within demographics with focus groups being utilised to ensure a strong representative example was achieved.

Neil Tipton updated the Panel on the number of responses received ten days in from the public launch of the consultation exercise. Extensive publicity was underway with assistance from the

Councils communications team as well as support from Rugby, Nuneaton and North Warwickshire Councils social media platforms. The Panel would be presented with a draft plan once responses had been processed towards the end of November or early part of December. Work would then progress to produce a final version.

Councillor Humphreys asked for a commitment to change the Plan if the responses received highlighted different areas of need. Neil Tipton gave assurances that draft priorities were tested and it would be the Commissioners choice to amend the Plan if he felt the concerns being expressed were valid and required a change of focus.

In response, the Commissioner reiterated the importance of the plan and agreed that issues may emerge that the Force had underestimated the level of concern for. The timeline for producing the draft report was discussed with the suggestion that it may be January before the final version was available for consideration. It was noted that feedback could be received electronically and a panel meeting arranged for January, if necessary.

The Chair expressed his hope for the consultation to be representative not only geographically but across a variety of age groups.

5. Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel Annual Report 2023/24

The Panel received an annual report outlining the Police and Crime Panel's work throughout 2023/24.

The report was noted.

6. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

There were none raised by the Community Safety Partnerships prior to the agenda being published.

7. Work Programme

The Panel received the work programmed and noted the future discussion items.

It was agreed that the Support Officer would liaise with OPCC officers to monitor progress with the Independent Review of the Warwickshire Hunt. It was recognised that the reviewer would have a better idea of timescales and the ability to report any findings back within the next few weeks.

8. Dates of Meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted and Members were reminded that a budget briefing would be programmed in for January 2025, ahead of the February Budget meeting.

9. Any Urgent Items

Councillor Jenkins raised the issue of Road Safety which was a priority under the current Police and Crime Plan, with many residents stating that speeding was problematic in many areas. He noted that Coventry City Council had a number of average speed check areas and queried if

Warwickshire could look at similar schemes. In response, the Commissioner agreed that road safety was a high priority in Warwickshire and advised that there were four pilots being rolled out shortly. The first pilot to be started would be located at Bassett's Pole, however, there were challenges with National Grid powering the necessary equipment. If the pilots proved successful, further cameras may be distributed around the County. The Commissioner reminded the Panel of the recent purchase of three speed vans with the latest technology onboard to capture high quality images.

The use of Safer Neighbourhood Teams to monitor speeding was also discussed with Councillor Jenkins querying if there were any statistics available from Community Speedwatch Teams (CST) showing that there was a reduction in speeding and showing the effectiveness of CST's. He felt it would be useful for them to be able to issue fines rather than just issuing letters.

Neil Tipton advised that at a recent event held with CST's volunteers in September, a senior lecturer in Policing at Staffordshire University had undertaken research which had shown the effectiveness of CST's with 72% of drivers sent letters by Community teams had agreed that this had made them want to change their behaviours. This had also resulted in 70% of drivers saying they would drive more slowly in future.

In Warwickshire, between the beginning of January and end of July this year, volunteers had carried out 345 hours of Community Speed Watches, resulting in speeds of with 83,000 vehicles being monitored and 2,500 drivers receiving education about their driving.

The Chair took this opportunity to thank the outgoing Support Officer, John Cole, for his hard work, dedication and support to the Panel over the past years and welcomed Senior Democratic Services Officer, Amy Bridgewater- Carnall to the Panel.

10. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved

That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the item mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

11. Complaints

It was confirmed that no complaints had been received since the last meeting requiring the Panel's attention.

The meeting rose at 15.25

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Chair