

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Monday 20 January 2025

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Andy Davis (Chair), Independent Member
Councillor Dave Humphreys (Vice-Chair), Warwickshire County Council
Andrew Davies, Independent Member
Councillor Claire Edwards, Rugby Borough Council
Councillor Jenny Fradgley, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Natalie Gist, Stratford-on-Avon District Council
Councillor Ray Jarvis, North Warwickshire Borough Council
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Jill Simpson-Vince, Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Jim Sinnott, Warwick District Council

Officers

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

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
Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications, Office of the Police and Crime Panel

1. General

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Warwickshire County Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Councillor, Tim Jenkins.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meetings

The minutes of the meetings held on 21 November and 16 December 2024 were agreed with a minor amendment to Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Daniell's job title.

(4) Public Speaking

The Chair advised that a request had been received from Mr Cunningham for questions to be read out in his absence. Following consideration, it had been decided that the questions related to operational policing and were, therefore, not appropriate for the Commissioner to respond to.

Mr Cunningham had been advised of the decision and signposted to the correct route for raising these queries.

2. Review of the Draft Police and Crime Plan

The Commissioner introduced the report which outlined the draft Warwickshire Police and Crime Plan for 2025/26. He explained that the Plan outlined the objectives for Warwickshire and provided a guide for the Chief Constable as to how residents felt the County should be policed. It also laid out how these objectives would be reported on and how the Force's progress would be measured.

The Commissioner reminded the Panel of the level of consultation carried out along with the use of independent consultants, TONIC. Communications had covered a wide geographical base along with a varied age range, which officers felt was a good representation of Warwickshire residents.

The Planning and Performance Working Group had considered an initial draft of the Plan at their meeting in September 2024. The Commissioner advised that this version included an enhanced focus on crime prevention and the Chief Constable's support for the plan.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for his introduction and opened the floor to questions from the Panel.

Councillor Fradgley referred to the grid of statistics on page 27 of the pack and asked if figures could be added to enable the public to draw a comparison on performance compared to last year. It was agreed that these could be provided to the Panel and would be a useful discussion area for the Planning and Performance Working Group, however, the grid had been included as a snapshot of a typical day in the Force. The Panel noted that this grid would evolve into an infographic description in the final version.

Councillor Dave Humphreys queried the statistics relating to 101 calls as he felt there were still improvements that could be made. He asked for clarification on the figures relating to the reporting of crimes via the internet. In response, the Commissioner explained how the triage system offered the option of completing an online form. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC), Emma Daniell, referred to the broadening range of options available to people contacting the Force, including the digital services online desk and new policing initiatives underneath 'Operation Invicto' which offered more ways to access virtual contact with officers if that was required.

Further discussions took place relating to 101 call response times along with clarification on when the timings for answering calls were taken from, e.g. as the call is answered, or once it had been triaged to another area. The Commissioner advised on historical and current call answering times and reiterated the importance of dialling 999 in any emergency issue, as the aim of the 101 service was to report ongoing issues. The DPCC gave an update on ongoing and future works which would continue to interrogate the system to monitor effectiveness.

The Chief Executive, Polly Reed, reminded the Panel that the Chief Constable was willing to look into individual call handling experiences as a learning tool of case studies.

It was agreed that a breakdown on answering times and triage processes could be added to the next agenda for the Planning and Performance Working Group.

Andrew Davies, Independent Member, acknowledged the high level of information within the draft plan, along with the competing priorities. He asked the Commissioner if he could outline his top three priorities within the plan. In response, the Commissioner referred to page 28 of the papers which set out twelve priorities, grouped under three key pillars. Of these the Commissioner highlighted policing effectiveness, reducing violent crime, and reducing theft, burglary and robbery, which were three of the key areas in his opinion.

Andrew Davies thanked the Commissioner and encouraged him to be clear with the community when priorities conflicted, as he recognised it was not possible to keep everybody happy.

In response to a question from Councillor Ray Jarvis, the DPCC advised that further detail on abandonment of calls could be looked at in the Planning and Performance Working Group, as well as data around whether the Police were the appropriate service to be calling in some cases. With regard to the query relating to the cover of calls from outside of Warwickshire's area, Emma Daniell explained that there was a national reciprocation of responding to 999 calls and on occasion, Warwickshire did have to provide support to other forces. If officers felt this service was being overused, they would raise it with the Chief Constable to ensure Warwickshire's numbers were not being adversely affected. However, it was noted that if Warwickshire's call centre was not able to operate, support would be provided by other areas.

Councillor Claire Edwards raised a concern that the document did not contain any reference to Hate Crime, instances of which appeared to be underreported. Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications OPCC, addressed this point and it was agreed that reference to this could be added underneath the 'Safeguard People' pillar (page 6 of 23) as it remained a priority for the Force and should have been included in the document

Councillor Simpson Vince noted that the document did not refer back to any previous achievements or successes, making it difficult to know where the plan was building from. She felt it may be useful to note that the Force had been on a journey over recent years and many improvements were already underway. The Commissioner acknowledged the comments and agreed to consider adding something in, whilst trying to maintain a forward-looking focus.

The Chair addressed the meeting, highlighting some of the styling and language used in the 'To achieve this I will' sections. He felt that this could be read as too passive and queried strengthening the language where possible. Neil Tipton explained that some of the activities referred to in these

sections were partnership based and it was not always possible to be definitive about proposed outcomes.

Councillor Edwards asked about the methodology used by TONIC as she did not feel the spread of respondents was as reflective of the whole County, particularly in urban areas of North Warwickshire. The Commissioner advised that this year had resulted in the most representative consultation carried out to date as historically some areas were recognised as harder to reach. Neil Tipton provided further detail about the proactive work undertaken to encourage responses from a broad sample of the community including the use of focus groups. Advertising was also used to target respondents in lower response areas and victims of crime were also contacted to participate.

Councillor Sinnott referred to the number of police officers per resident, which varied throughout the country and asked if the Commissioner had aspirations to raise Warwickshire's numbers. The Commissioner agreed that he would like to see an increase, if funding allowed. He referred to the National Police Funding Formula which continued to be problematic as he felt it disadvantaged Warwickshire, compared to other areas. It was noted that Commissioners across the country continued to encourage the Home Office to look at the issue seriously.

The Chair referred to the comments made at the AGM of National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCP) which had made it clear that many members felt their areas were disadvantaged. The Commissioner acknowledged the population growth in Warwickshire and the impact of its geographical position, and unique make up with the convergence of six motorways and a number of tourist centres.

The Chair advised that the Police and Crime Plan was revisited by the Panel every year and would be added to the Forward Plan for future meetings. The Commissioner thanked the Panel for their input and welcomed the comments made.

Resolved that a formal response to the Draft Police and Crime Plan would be submitted to the Commissioner shortly, highlighting the observations and recommendations made.

3. Independent Review into Policing of Hunting-Related Activities in Warwickshire

The report related to the Independent Review, commissioned by the Commissioner, in response to public and stakeholder concerns regarding Warwickshire Police's handling of road safety concerns surrounding the activities of the Warwickshire Hunt. A copy of the reviewer's report was attached at Appendix A.

The Commissioner introduced the report, referring to the review undertaken by David Peet, which had now completed and the findings published to the public. He advised that the review had been undertaken in accordance with the Terms of Reference and had resulted in a number of learnings and recommendations for the Chief Constable, Warwickshire Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel were advised that the Chief Constable had accepted the recommendations, some of which were already in place but it was highlighted there was more to do.

The Commissioner reiterated that the reviewer had been not been under any restrictions in relation to timings or participants of the review and had been provided with access to all documentation

requested. Mr Peet had spoken to a number of parties including those who had previously addressed Members at Police and Crime Panel meetings. In conclusion, he felt that the review had been thorough, independent and well researched and would result in improving road safety matters around trail and drag hunting.

Councillor Gist referred to paragraph 2.7 on page 105 of the pack, which made reference to "...this relatively minor issue....". She felt strongly that when residents were directly affected by anti-social behaviour, it was not fair to describe it as minor. The Commissioner agreed that this was an important issue, whilst acknowledging the competing demands the Police had to manage.

The Chair asked for clarification on how the recommendations would be acted upon, noting that eleven of them applied to the Force and eight applied to the OPCC. The Commissioner advised that the Chief Constable and he would be implementing the recommendations themselves and suggested that the Panel may consider monitoring progress. It was noted that a lot of the proposals had already been actioned or were in progress. Polly Reed advised that the recommendations had been converted into an action plan, with all ACC's having input as to the activity to be taken forwards. In addition, the work would feature on the holding to account schedule and would continue to be monitored.

Councillor Sinnott welcomed the ability to keep track of the recommendations and to be able to see tangible improvements. He recognised that this was a serious issue and hoped feedback on the recommendations would be welcomed.

Councillor Edwards queried the language used, which she felt could have been stronger. She also asked for clarification on Recommendation C which proposed that "The Force consider reviewing and updating its published list of Business Interests".

Polly Reed explained that with regard to the language used, the reviewer was not in a position to compel the force, only advise. It was then the Commissioner's choice to state their expectations and hold the Force to account. Assurances were given that the recommendations had been accepted and evolved into tangible actions. In response to the query relating to Recommendation C, the Panel were advised that this had already been actioned and completed.

Following a query raised about Gold Groups being operational, the Panel noted that the OPCC now received an invitation to gold group meetings, something which had not happened before, along with a list of all of the gold groups running.

Andrew Davies noted there had been an acknowledgement within the review of some areas not working correctly. He asked the Commissioner how confident he was that all lessons had been learned and that this issue would not reoccur in the future. The Commissioner recognised that it was not possible to make that statement about any crime, however, he felt that the proposals would strengthen the police response to anti-social behaviour and help to make it easier to report ASB, or other crimes. He stated that he expected the police to uphold the law without fear or favour.

Andrew Davies agreed that nobody could predict the future and asked for further assurance that by adopting these measures, processes, procedures and governance, actions would be picked up. The Commissioner reiterated that was the intention and highlighted that the report was

independent. He agreed that he needed to ensure his office undertook those actions in order to improve the policing and reporting of ASB in a positive way.

Following a question from the Chair, the Commissioner advised that he was pleased with the amount of research, inspection of documents and discussions with people inside and outside of the force. He committed to ensuring the force stood up to this for the remainder of his term and welcomed the improvements made so far, including the introduction of a special point of contact and the education undertaken by control room staff. He noted the important role the Rural Crime team played and acknowledged that more engagement was needed. Finally, he welcomed the items that had been identified as requiring improvement.

Councillor Edwards noted that the author of the report was not present and queried the methodology used, including who had been interviewed and their seniority, access to paperwork and whether the reviewer had felt there were any gaps in the interview process.

The Commissioner gave assurance that Mr Peet had interviewed everyone he wanted to, with the OPCC office facilitating all requests. Polly Reed supported this, advising that Mr Peet was not given any guidance on who to interview and he had not provided the office with a full list of those he had spoken to. Mr Peet had contacted the office with requests for documents and there was nothing he had asked for that existed that he did not receive. The Panel were assured that Mr Peet had been happy that he had access to everything he needed. One of the reasons the review had taken longer than originally planned, was because the first round of interviews had resulted in further individuals Mr Peet wanted to speak to.

The Commissioner was aware that Mr Peet had spoken to senior officers at Warwickshire Police, as well as the ex-Chief Constable, new Chief Constable and officers at all levels of rank.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for responding to questions and it was agreed that an update on the progress implementing all recommendations detailed in the report would be added to the Panel's work programme for future monitoring.

Resolved that

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) an update on the progress of all recommendations would be added to the Panel's work programme, with a view to receiving a report at the June 2025 meeting.

4. Work Programme

It was agreed that the following items be added to the work programme:

- 1) an annual review of the Police and Crime Plan;
- 2) an update on the Independent Review recommendations for continued monitoring, first report planned for June 2025.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley requested an update on the progress of policing 20mph speed limits. The Commissioner advised that he was still waiting for an answer from the Speed Watch Team and would update the Panel as soon as possible.

5. Dates of Meetings

The dates of future meetings were noted and the Panel would be contacted with potential dates for Planning and Performance Working Groups in March and June 2025.

6. Any Urgent Items

There were none.

7. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

There were none.

8. Complaints

The Chief Executive advised that there were no complaints to update the Panel on.

The meeting rose at 11.12am

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Chair