

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 19 November 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor David Reilly (Chair)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Nicola Davies
Councillor Ian Davison
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor Peter Gilbert
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Maggie O'Rourke
Councillor Christopher Watkins
Councillor Andrew Wright
Andy Davis
Bob Malloy

Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner

Philip Seccombe, Police & Crime Commissioner
Sara Ansell, Treasurer
Neil Hewison, Chief Executive
David Patterson, Development and Policy Lead – Performance
Neil Tipton, Head of Media and Communications

Officers

Deborah Moseley, Senior Democratic Services Officer
John Cole, Trainee Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jane Pollard, Legal Advisor
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

Guests

David Carter, Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Chief Inspector Faz Chishty, Warwickshire Police
Andrew Davies, Proposed Independent Panel Member
Sergeant Kate Wallace, Warwickshire Police

1. General

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and noted there were some immediate and planned changes to the membership of the Panel and at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner:-

- The retirement of Councillor Sarah Whalley-Hoggins as Stratford upon Avon District Council's representative on the Panel. The Chair paid Tribute to Councillor Whalley-Hoggins' invaluable contribution to the Panel, particularly through her challenge of performance and efficiency matters.
- Councillor Christopher Kettle was newly appointed to the Panel as Stratford upon Avon District Council's representative.
- Mr Bob Malloy, one of the Panel's independent members, was due to retire from the Panel early in December and Councillor Nicola Davies was invited to lead a vote of thanks to Mr Malloy for his considerable and significant contribution to the work of the Panel since its inception. Mr Malloy responded that his experience as a Panel Member had been a positive one and it had been a great pleasure to serve on the Panel. He thanked the Commissioner and his Office and colleagues on the Panel.
- Mr Andrew Davies, the proposed new independent Panel Member was welcomed as a guest to this meeting and it was noted his appointment would be formally proposed later on the agenda.
- This was the last meeting for Mr Neil Hewison as Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Councillor Derek Poole extended thanks to Mr Hewison on behalf of the Panel for a direct and positive working relationship. In response, Mr Hewison stated his decision to retire had not been an easy one, noting his positive working relationship with the Commissioner and the Panel, and he noted the challenges that both would face in the coming year.

The Chair also welcomed David Carter as a guest to the meeting, observing as a member of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee.

(1) Apologies

None.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 September 2020 and 9 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to amending the spelling of Andy Davis' surname on the attendance list for 9 October 2020.

(4) Public Speaking

Councillor Keith Kondakor was welcomed to the meeting and invited to put his questions to the Commissioner:-

Councillor Kondakor asked about the perceived lack of fair enforcement of COVID regulations

when some in the traveller community were attending funerals and weddings in groups of 100-200. He gave the example of a wedding at the start of the month in Nuneaton.

The Commissioner noted that it was important to treat all minority groups in a fair and reasonable way and he was aware of tensions created by unauthorised encampments and large gatherings for weddings and funerals in Rugby and Nuneaton. The Commissioner shared his understanding that event organisers had generally observed regulations for indoor gatherings but problems had arisen when additional people arrived at a venue and loitered in the vicinity. He pointed out that the police had limited enforcement powers and marshalling these large groups would require a disproportionate response. The Commissioner had also discussed the events with local MPs Mark Pawsey and Marcus Jones. He felt that it was important that event organisers anticipated the wider impact and sought to ensure appropriate highways diversions etc were in place. In the meantime, he would be talking with communities, local authorities and residents and would do his best to reduce the effect on local residents.

Neil Hewison added that he had spoken to the gold and silver commanders for the operations for recent events to get a view of the police response and provide some clarity about the police role. He echoed the Commissioner's comments that each event had been properly organised with regulations being observed to limit the number of attendees but it was the additional people who turned up at events who had created the problem. The police only had power to enforce the regulations - ie those in the church, at the graveside or in the event. There were no powers to enforce social distancing, and people turning up at events being aggressive and uncooperative did not take advice on social distancing. It was a difficult policing issue, which was not as clear cut as the public perception.

Councillor Kondakor asked about the Police and Commissioner attitude to having appropriate speed limits to ensure safer walking and cycling.

The Commissioner responded that speed limits were subject to ongoing discussion between local councillors, authorities, schools, developers and the police. It was not something that he had specifically raised with the force before but he felt that decisions made by the highway authority (ie Warwickshire County Council), needed to reflect more joint working. He stated he was not against speed limits outside schools. The Commissioner undertook to discuss the topic with the force to see if it was possible to increase joint working to implement lower speed limits in specific areas.

Councillor Kondakor noted recent media reports about cuts to backroom support and it was noted that this issue would be considered later in the meeting.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented his report which was intended to provide the members of the Panel with an update on his key activities since the last meeting in September. This included responses to questions submitted at the last meeting, the publication of his final annual report for 2019/20, an update on the Police establishment focussing on recruitment and detective officer intake, diversity, equality and inclusion, police performance, support for Harper's Law, an update on personnel changes in the Office, review of MASH arrangements, gypsy and roma travellers, improvement to the criminal justice system given the impact of Covid 19, road

safety victims remembrance service and engagement activity. The Commissioner also paid tribute to Neil Hewison, Chief Executive, who would be leaving the Office at the end of the year.

The Panel noted that there were unacceptably high numbers of people injured/killed on Warwickshire roads and supported the continued championing of this cause by the PCC as partners were benefitting from his leadership in this regard.

Councillor Kettle sought an update on the funding position for the current year and the impact of the pandemic on finances and noted that it would be helpful to have a brief financial summary in future reports until the impact of the pandemic dissipated. The PCC provided an overview, noting that monthly monitoring activity took place and the budget process had commenced. Finances had been supported by a generous level of reserves left by his predecessor but these were now reducing and his Office needed to look seriously at producing a balanced budget meaning that there were some difficult decisions to take. Pressures were being caused by the pandemic, there had been some reimbursement relating to PPE, but there was also overspend on additional overtime due to policing. More generally there were significant pressures as a result of the ending of the alliance and reserves had been earmarked for IT and transactional services. The government grant settlement will not be released until just before Christmas/early in the new year, but his Office would work hard to put together a budget and consult on it.

Sara Ansell, Treasurer at the OPCC, indicated that she could provide some financial details in future reports. The Budget Working Group were meeting in the following week and the information presented could be disseminated to the wider panel if desired and she noted that the schedule of meetings for the Budget Working Group may need to be reconsidered to try to provide for onward reporting to the Full Panel meeting. With regard to the impact of Covid, in the first six months, there was a loss of income of around £1m. This related to PPE and overtime but also lost income, eg in relation to speed awareness courses. Some reimbursement of costs had been received (£112000 PPE, £300000 income losses and surge funding of £205000). A Covid fund of £500000 had been implemented by the PCC.

Councillor Kettle asked what the shortfall for the current year was and what percentage of the overall spend that represented. Sara Ansell responded that the quarter 2 budget monitoring report would demonstrate an increased draw down from reserves. It had been anticipated that £4m from reserves would be required to meet transitional and one off costs from the ending of the alliance with West Mercia together with the increased draw down due to Covid related costs and other transitional costs. More detail would be presented to the Budget Working Group.

Mr Bob Malloy referred to the detective development programme and the 18 new investigating officers, however, he noted that the Coventry Telegraph was reporting 80 Police Officers were under threat of redundancy which would result in a net loss of 62 investigators. The PCC advised that this was an ongoing process with a consultation period which Unison was involved with. He had an understanding of the rationale behind the proposals which related to staff investigators who were mainly ex-Police Officers drafted in to assist the force at a time when there had been a shortage of investigators. The Chief Executive pointed out that this was an operational decision and the PCC had a series of detailed questions to pose to the Chief Constable relating to the rationale and risk and also to ensure that the people affected by the proposal were being dealt with properly and receiving any necessary support. Mr Malloy noted the assertion that the existing civilian officers were ex-Police Officers who had 30 years' experience, and expressed concern that their replacement by 18 newly trained officers represented not only a lack of numbers but also

capacity in terms of experience. The Chair echoed this concern in terms of efficiency, an issue for the Planning and Performance Working Group.

Councillor Ian Davison asked if provision would be made in the budget to finance the climate action plan and the PCC advised that an understanding of post-pandemic policing was still being developed, eg cutting down journeys from some parts of the organisation. He was also involved with Blue Light Commercial which was looking at fleet procurement – but electric vehicles were not without their issues (charging points and speed). Some contributions towards the action plan could be done without too much expenditure, for instance cycling and use of public transport. However, there were no major expensive capital or revenue dominated schemes to introduce. The issue would form part of the next Police and Crime Plan if Mr Seccombe was re-elected in May 2021.

Councillor Davies asked for the PCC's view on the current Covid crisis and the challenges to the force. The PCC advised that overall the force had issued 372 fixed penalty notices and 48% of those had been paid (other forces had a lower percentage rate). There had been three £10K fines issued for lockdown breaches, but forces nationally had been asked not to serve anymore for the time being. The PCC considered that Warwickshire Police had got the balance right in terms of enforcement during lockdown and he noted that satisfaction in the force had gone up since the beginning of the pandemic. The pandemic had really brought the Four 'E's Approach to the fore and the application of this four phase approach (Engage, Explain, Encourage, Enforce) had supported the diffusion of a number of situations. Lockdown would continue until 2 December 2020 and the PCC was confident the force would continue to respond in a proportionate and reasonable way. Enforcement was not possible in all situations but Officers were receiving good briefings on what they could and could not do and were responding with agility to changes in the law despite the Home Office and College of Policing not issuing guidelines until changes were actually coming into effect. Overall, the PCC considered that the force had worked with all the other partners and attended (following a THRIVE assessment), when asked, many incidents.

Councillor Davison also noted from the report that a number of officers had had to self-isolate and asked if there was anything further the force could do to help keep them safe. The PCC advised that many cases of self-isolation came about as a result of a child being at school. Not all of the 8% stated had the virus and there had been no hospital admissions. Not all jobs were suitable for working at home (eg patrol officer) but there was a lot of access to professional help.

3. Presentation on the work of the Positive Action Team

Chief Inspector Faz Chishty and Sergeant Kate Wallace attended the meeting to provide an update on Warwickshire Positive Action Programme. The presentation slides had been circulated to Members in advance and concentrated on the policing visions, objectives of positive action, community engagement activity, engagement with candidates, communications and marketing, challenges, results and the way forward.

At the end of the presentation, the Panel asked a number of questions-

Mr Andy Davis asked about leadership development and how staff were nurtured within the organisation to ensure that the leadership was more representative. Sergeant Kate Wallace responded that it was important to continue work to retain and develop Officers and this might not necessarily be an upwards promotion but a sideways move into a specialist area. Workshops

were available to those candidates looking for promotion to Inspector and Sergeant. These opportunities were marketed through staff networks to encourage applications from under represented groups. There were also plans to develop study support for those candidates sitting exams. Chief Inspector Faz Chishty added that there were mentors and coaches available through the support staff network.

The Chair reflected on the volumes of people leaving the force and asked whether the effectiveness of exit interviews had been considered. Sergeant Kate Wallace advised that a new questionnaire had been developed and the first line manager had been removed from the process. It was considered that having an exit interview conducted by the second line manager or a senior leader provided for a more open and honest review. In the current year, there had only been one Police Officer leave and this had led to work with the Learning and Development Team around provision to better inform and prepare new candidates. Chief Inspector Faz Chishty added that it was important for leavers to have the opportunity of a safe space but this was governed by the individual and their wishes.

Councillor Christopher Kettle highly commended the work of the team and asked if any research had been undertaken about the initial causes or under-representation in order to address any legacy issues. Chief Inspector Faz Chishty commented that there were various misnomers and perceptions existing in each community, for instance in Asian communities and black communities, policing held no status and there was a lack of personal interaction to dispel myths.

In conclusion, the Chair expressed the Panel's thanks for the presentation and wished the Team luck with the work they were undertaking, offering the Panel's support for the force's ambition to properly represent the community.

4. Appointment of Independent Member to the Police and Crime Panel

This report, introduced by the Senior Democratic Services Officer, detailed the requirement for the appointment of independent members to the Panel and the recent recruitment activity to appoint a new independent member following the stepping down of Mr Bob Malloy when his term ended on 5 December 2020. A robust recruitment process had taken place and the member selection panel recommended the appointment of Mr Andrew Davies.

Resolved:

That Mr Andrew Davies is appointed to the Independent Member role on the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel from 6 December 2020.

5. Refresh of the Membership of the Panel's Working Groups

Due to changes in the membership of the Panel, there were vacancies in the membership of the Planning and Performance Working Group. Existing Members were content with their roles and it was agreed that the Chair and Democratic Services would arrange to fill the vacancies.

6. Work Programme

In light of discussion earlier in the meeting, the Panel agreed to add an item to the work programme regarding Gypsy and Roma Travellers, focussing on the leadership role of the PCC.

Due to the recent unitary debate across the County, it was agreed that an item on Local Government Reorganisation and the implications for the PCC in terms of Police and Fire and Rescue Services should be added to a future agenda.

7. Dates of Meetings

It was noted that the pre-election period would commence in March and Democratic Services was asked to re-arrange the date of the April meeting to a more suitable date.

8. Any Urgent Items

None.

9. 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 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

10. Exempt Minutes

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. Complaints

None.

The meeting rose at 12.56pm

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Chair