

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 24 June 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor David Reilly
Councillor Derek Poole
Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Ian Davison
Councillor Clare Golby
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Dave Humphreys
Councillor Christopher Kettle
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher
Andy Davis
Andrew Davies

Officers

Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)
Ian Marriott, Delivery Lead - Commercial and Regulatory
Deborah Moseley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Others Present

Sara Ansell, Treasurer, Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner
Helen Knee, Joint Audit & Standards Committee
Dave Patterson, Development and Policy Lead, Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

1. General

(1) Apologies

None.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None.

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct

record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

None.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented his report to the Panel which provided an update on his activities since the last report on 18 March 2021. The report focussed on the PCC's return to office following elections in May 2021, recruitment for the new Chief Constable, establishment numbers, crime rates, performance accountability, an update on the Evolve change programme, workstreams that the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) had been engaged in since the last report (including finances, commissioned services and grants, volunteers scheme, police complaint reforms, road safety), collaboration activity (including Blue Light Commercial Limited, Warwickshire Bluelight Joint Advisory Collaboration Board, Local Criminal Justice Board and Warwickshire Strategic Road Safety Partnership), and engagement activity.

In response to a question from Councillor Dave Humphreys regarding establishment numbers, the PCC noted that the transformation to a standalone force was a significant challenge and a large proportion of the budget was allocated to payroll and associated payments. The bulk of new officers were funded by the taxpayer rather than central government and he believed that residents would not accept a higher level of precept to increase officer numbers further, but this would be a topic for future consultation.

Responding to a question from the Chair regarding Police Officer Establishment (graph 1), the PCC explained that the spike in the graph that could be seen in June 2021 related to an intake of officers and the subsequent standstill related to the budgeted number of officers for the period being 1048 and the force being requested not to overspend on pay through further recruitment. The pay budget from 1 April would increase to a figure that would see the establishment rise to 1100. The control of officer numbers was not an exact science, primarily due to some individuals deciding to leave the force.

Councillor Jenny Fradgley asked about loss of expertise as suggested by the report at page 30 in relation to Stop & Search. The PCC responded that whilst he did not have exact figures, approximately 40% of the force had less than three years' service and a drain on experience was expected as officers with long service left and new ones joined. However, the comments in the report were related directly to Stop & Search and were not related to the general picture.

In response to a question from Councillor John Holland regarding speeding enforcement, the PCC noted that the Chief Constable had increased the roads team and they were supported by good kit including vehicles, expenditure of £0.5m on education for learners and pre-learners, and Warwickshire's villages were being encouraged to set up their own speed watch teams. However, he noted that speed enforcement would not fully address the problem of road safety and he suggested that the Panel also lobby County Councillors Redford and Crump who were portfolio holders with responsibilities in this subject. He also noted a national campaign to ensure emergency services were statutory beneficiaries of Section 106 planning obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

In response to a question from Councillor Derek Poole regarding the deployment of speed reduction vehicles to problem areas, the PCC advised that local speed watch teams could anticipate an earlier deployment if they were constantly recording speeding problems. He welcomed the work of speed watch teams and considered that local parishes could be the ignition for setting up new schemes in their areas and that there would be volunteers who simply needed to be trained. Knowing the areas where speeding problems manifested was a support to the force and often the presence of a high vis jacket was enough to slow traffic.

The Panel expressed concern at their understanding that some speed watch schemes had been disbanded, particularly in light of reports that statistics relating to killed and seriously injured (KSI) casualties in North Warwickshire were not reducing. The PCC explained that KSI statistics for the whole county had halved during the pandemic and that speed watch schemes had been stopped at the beginning of the pandemic due to the lower number of vehicles on the road; additionally some volunteers had resigned meaning some recruiting and retraining was needed. Councillors Kettle and Golby emphasised that there should be a focus on accident prevention rather than investigation and Councillor Golby noted the PCC's previous comments regarding the role of the Highways Authority and opined that a proactive approach needed to be applied to facilitate collective policy change thereby reducing accident numbers across the whole of the County. The PCC suggested that this was the role of the Road Safety Partnership which funded local initiatives but, as with all budget setting practices, difficult decisions were required about where to target funds. The Chair noted the Panel's commitment to this issue and funding streams which included HS2 road safety funding.

Councillor Clare Golby asked for further information regarding the standalone ICT function for Warwickshire Police that was included in the Evolve Programme and, since this was commercially sensitive information, the PCC offered to provide details in the exempt session at the end of the meeting.

With regard to the standalone ICT function, Councillor Christopher Kettle sought reassurances that Warwickshire Police maintained facilities to communicate with other forces. The PCC advised that all 999 calls were directed to a national filter. There was a national programme to replace the existing Airwave system and deliver integration of all emergency services with the next generation Emergency Services Network (ESN) which would enable frontline and control room personnel to communicate over a new network. The local Storm command and control platform would be upgraded in the new control room when it opened (in July 2021 subject to the framework being built and tested). The PCC confirmed that the force maintained an ability to communicate with neighbouring forces and particularly noted cross border communication with Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Gloucestershire police forces, and he was pushing, through the Chief Constable, to improve lines of communication so that victims received better, more timely responses. Polly Reed, the Chief Executive at the OPCC, clarified that the use of the phrase "standalone" referred to the force and procurement processes being standalone from the previous alliance arrangements with West Mercia, not that Warwickshire Police did not interact with other forces or organisations.

In response to a question from Councillor Bhagwant Pandher regarding the measures being taken to address the disproportional impact on black, ethnic and minority communities in the Use of Force and Stop and Search, the PCC noted that this reflected the national picture and further work needed to be undertaken to understand the reasons and causes. He noted that the approach to Stop and Search had reduced the number of knives on the streets. David Patterson, Development and Policy Lead (OPCC), noted concern about the statistics and confirmed that the subject had

been discussed with the Chief Constable and diversity would be the focus of a deep dive topic. He also highlighted that HMICFRS had made recommendations on disproportionality and this provided opportunities to monitor how those recommendations were being progressed. He noted that the data was set against a backdrop of County Lines and the proximity to the urban conurbations, but more understanding was needed in this respect. The PCC added that officers conducting Stop and Search were required to use body worn cameras.

Reflecting on Councillor Jenny Fradgley's comments about broadening the use of Stop and Search in the fight against County Lines, the PCC noted that there were different circumstances across the county and it was important to stop all people, regardless of their background, falling victim. More concrete evidence of the issues driving County Lines involvement and victimisation was needed. The force was taking part in a national debate on drug enforcement and also engaging with the Mental Health Trust. David Patterson expanded on the work that the force were undertaking to identify and complete gaps in data to obtain a more holistic picture of the force's current position and where it needed to be.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Davison regarding complaints, the PCC advised that complaints were his responsibility. Any complainants to the police had a right of appeal to him but there were no further rights of appeal. The Chair invited Helen Knee, a member of the Joint Audit and Standards Committee, to comment on her role undertaking dip sampling of complaints, the results of which were formally reported back to the team. The sampling considered the level of service, rather than the outcome.

Regarding the PCC's work with the Local Criminal Justice Board and the deep dive into criminal justice detailed in the report, Mr Andrew Davies asked for more information that would provide the Panel with a feel on progress being made and suggested the PCC could highlight two things being done to reduce the court backlog. The PCC noted that the pandemic had hit the court system hard although both Warwickshire's crown courts were open and cases were coming through from other parts of the country. He had been able to meet with the resident judge and it was considered that the judiciary had done a good job. However, there were concerns about the length of the backlog and the impact on victims and witness testimony. He did not have a statutory duty to hold the court service to account but had been able to seek a close working relationship. The primary task was to reach pre-pandemic timescales and then improve upon that. Polly Reed, the Chief Executive at the OPCC agreed that further information could be made available in future reports.

Responding to a question from Mr Andy Davis regarding future engagement plans, the PCC indicated that he had undertaken a lot of activity on Zoom and Teams but did not find this as productive as physical meetings. He was building a pattern of visiting schools and would get back into full engagement mode as soon as national regulations allowed. New engagement activity with communities and social media activities were planned to ensure an understanding of local problems. David Patterson confirmed that an engagement plan was in place and Mr Davis sought reports on the outcome of engagement taking place over the PCC's term of office. It was suggested by Polly Reed that this could be incorporated into the annual report.

In response to a question from Councillor Christopher Kettle regarding sickness statistics, the PCC noted that he received a weekly report on sickness levels and that there was not a significant trend being seen. The force had done well to keep absence levels low, particularly as the pandemic had presented significant challenges. The force had complied with all Covid-safety rules and the numbers of individuals self-isolating were low.

Turning to the statistics presented in the report in relation to hate crime, the PCC responded to questions from Councillors Kettle and Golby regarding the reasons for the upward trend shown in the report. He considered an increase in reporting was good news as it had previously been felt there had been under-reporting of this crime and the statistics provided an evidence base to provide appropriate funding levels. The PCC advised that he would be addressing Warwickshire Pride to talk about hate crime and what was being done to tackle it. David Patterson explained that 'hate crime' was defined by statute, and that whilst some incidents may not reach that threshold they would have a hate element. He echoed that increased reporting was positive and added that the focus was on the victims' experience and support for them.

Reflecting on the content of the report, the Panel made a number of observations that they considered would improve the quality of the information presented to them in the future and thereby support their ability to add value through critical friend scrutiny:

- Charts in the report generally presented data in terms of percentages or figures at a fixed date in time, but it would be helpful to the Panel to understand the context behind the statistics together with direction of travel and confidence intervals. David Patterson noted that the data was based upon a more comprehensive official sensitive report that included more information. He offered reassurance that victim satisfaction rates (one of the charts referred to) were improving.
- References to the Evolve 2 Programme were vague and did not give sufficient information for the Panel to understand what the programme was about or the processes that were taking place. The PCC noted that a lot of the underlying information regarding Evolve 2 was commercially sensitive and suggested that more information be presented to the Budget Working Group. Sara Ansell, Treasurer, noted that the Budget Working Group would next meet in August when an in-depth report on outturn was expected and this could include a breakdown of Evolve costs.
- Using the road safety item in the report as an example, the Panel sought more focussed and informative narrative that could be subject to scrutiny, rather than reports on promotional activities. The PCC noted the sentiment and explained his reasoning for their inclusion was that these types of topics benefited from any opportunities that brought key messages to public attention.

Councillor Ian Davison cautioned against seeking additional data and figures without a clear objective in mind due to the level of work that was required to present and interpret statistics. Realistically, he considered that additional data should focus on areas of specific topics and deep dives with consideration given to the timing of reviews to maximise impact. The PCC noted that in an effort to make the most efficient use of staff time, his reports sought to provide an overview that was sufficient to enable the Panel to fulfil its obligations with regard to holding him to account. In response, the Chair reflected on the Panel's wider scrutiny function and the added challenge presented by the alliance arrangement and subsequent transition to a standalone force.

3. Appointment to Working Groups

The Panel were asked to consider the continuance of the Panel's existing working groups, the working groups' terms of reference and the appointments to the two working groups.

Resolved:

1. The Panel confirmed the continuation of the Planning and Performance Working Group and the Budget Working Group.
2. The Panel confirmed the terms of reference of the two working groups as set out in the appendices to the report.
3. That the appointments to the Working Groups be as follows:-
 - a) Budget Working Group: Councillors Christopher Kettle, Derek Poole, Jenny Fradgley and John Holland
 - b) Planning & Performance Working Group: Mr Andy Davis, Mr Andrew Davies, Councillors Dave Humphreys, Barbara Brown, Clare Golby and Christopher Kettle
4. That Councillor Christopher Kettle be appointed Chair of the Budget Working Group and that Mr Andy Davis be appointed Chair of the Planning & Performance Working Group.

4. Work Programme

Reflecting on the discussions that had taken place earlier in the meeting, Members requested changes to the work programme as follows:-

1. 20mph speed limits around schools to be brought forward to 23 September 2021 and the scope be broadened to speed limits and general road safety. The PCC expressed the view that the Panel should also meet with the County Council on this topic and Councillor Clare Golby noted work on this topic was being undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny at Warwickshire County Council which may be of interest to the Panel. The Chair asked Panel Members to consider how their wider role as elected representatives could influence this issue.
2. Gypsy, Roma & Travellers would be considered at the meeting on 18 November 2021.
3. The PCC reported that the new Chief Constable would be happy to attend on 18 November 2021.
4. The Planning and Performance Working Group would consider the Panel's approach to organised crime and County Lines.
5. With regard to the proposed climate action plan, the point was made that the stated 2050 target for carbon reduction was not aligned to new government targets (enshrined in law in April 2021) to have 78% carbon reduction by 2035.

5. Dates of Meetings

Future meeting dates were noted. Members noted that venues were yet to be confirmed but reiterated the objective to engage with the communities across the County. Members considered that a change to the start time of meetings would better support arrangements to hold the meetings outside Warwick and agreed future meetings would commence at 2.00pm, subject to review.

6. Any Urgent Items

None.

7. 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 and 7 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972’.

The Panel adjourned for 10 minutes at this point in the meeting.

8. Exempt Minutes

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9. Complaints

None.

10. Evolve 2 - Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Services

Earlier in the meeting, Councillor Clare Golby had asked for further information regarding the standalone ICT function for Warwickshire Police that was included in the Evolve change programme. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the topic, the response was given in exempt session.

The meeting rose at 1.02pm

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Chair