

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Annual Report 2020/21



North Warwickshire
Borough Council

Nuneaton
&
Bedworth



Chair's Foreword



Councillor David Reilly

Chair of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel
2020/21

There is no hiding how challenging this year has been. After emerging in China in December 2019, the global Covid-19 pandemic ferociously took hold of the UK in March 2020 and, in common with other countries, we entered a period of uncertainty and disruption on a scale not seen since the Second World War. There were profound implications for the public and policing and the Panel also had to quickly develop new ways of working to hold our meetings remotely on the Microsoft Teams platform. I would like to place on record my thanks to my fellow Panel Members who continued to steadfastly fulfil their roles in extremely unusual circumstances.

Despite the extraordinary times that cover the period of this report, the Panel worked hard to maintain a business as usual approach, continuing to support and challenge Philip Secombe in his role as Police and Crime Commissioner, acting as a 'critical friend' as he implemented the objectives set out in the Police and Crime Plan and the Covid-19 Supplement. Rising to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Panel has maintained a strategic approach and this report sets out the areas we have focussed on in this unprecedented year.

I would like to thank the Police and Crime Commissioner, his Office, and the Chief Constable, for their hard work over this last year. The Panel has benefitted from a constructive and positive working relationship with the Commissioner, which we will seek to build upon following his re-election this year, and I am grateful to him and his staff for their engagement and willingness to be scrutinised during what has been an incredibly challenging time for them, managing the impact of the pandemic whilst emerging from the Alliance with West Mercia Police.

Local elections this year means that our Panel membership has changed once again and I look forward to working with colleagues both old and new during the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Reilly', written in a cursive style.

Councillor David Reilly
Chair of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Summary of Key Activities and Achievements

The Police and Crime Panel performed its role as the Police and Crime Commissioner's 'critical friend' over six meetings held in public, scrutinising and challenging the Commissioner on the delivery of the four priorities identified in the Police and Crime Plan:

- Putting victims and survivors first
- Protecting people from harm
- Ensuring efficient and effective policing
- Preventing and reducing crime

All the reports considered by the Panel and minutes of the meetings can be found on the [Warwickshire County Council website](#). Panel meetings were also live streamed on the Council's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/WarwickshireCountyC/videos> and the footage will be available for 12 months after each meeting.

The Budget Working Group has performed a key role throughout the year by continuing to undertake detailed reviews of budget and quarterly finance reports, evaluating the proposed precept, and continuing to monitor the Commissioner's financial plans, including the capital and revenue programmes. The Budget Working Group has also worked with the Commissioner's Treasurer to tailor the way budget reports are delivered to the Group. The Budget Working Group also received a detailed briefing on the Commissioner's grant making process, particularly focussing on community safety grants.

The Panel is pleased to have developed a working relationship with the Warwickshire Joint Audit & Standards Committee (JASC), which considers internal and external audit reports, standards, including police ethics and transparency of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable. The Panel welcomes a member of the JASC to each of its meetings and, the Chair of the Panel attends JASC meetings in an observatory capacity. The Panel received the JASC's comprehensive Annual Report in April 2021, and despite the difficult working arrangements as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was pleasing to note that the JASC had also continued its meeting cycle and had received a number of briefings outside formal meetings. The Chairs of the Panel and JASC intend to meet in 2021/22 to discuss how joint working arrangements can be further developed.

2021/22 Budget

The Police and Crime Panel has a statutory duty to review the Commissioner's budget and can veto the budget if it decides that the proposed increase in the policing element of the council tax (known as the 'precept') is either too high or too low.

In February 2021, the Commissioner presented his proposed budget for 2021/22 including an increase in the precept of £14.99 (6.3%) for Band D properties (and equivalent percentage increase for all other bands). In his presentation, the

Commissioner acknowledged that whilst the current climate was challenging for everyone, many residents living in lower value properties would pay less and he had sought to balance the funding needs of Warwickshire police against the precept decision.

After detailed scrutiny, the Panel resolved to support the Commissioner's budget proposals. In doing so, the Panel recognised the challenge of setting a balanced budget and the move away from a reliance on reserves. The Panel acknowledged that there were some uncertainties in the year ahead, not least from the impact of the ongoing pandemic and the continued transition from the Alliance with West Mercia.

In addition to receiving regular budget monitoring reports and a comprehensive briefing on the precept proposals, the Budget Working Group also received a detailed report on the Commissioner's grant making activities in relation to community safety.

Termination of the Strategic Alliance and Future Collaboration Opportunities

The challenges associated with the termination of the Strategic Alliance between Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police has continued to be a matter of significant focus for the Panel. Throughout the year, the Police and Crime Commissioner has provided regular updates to the Panel of the progress made towards development of a predominantly independent Warwickshire Police Force.

The Alliance was formally terminated in April 2020 but four services (IT, Forensics, Transactional Services and File Storage) have proved to be more complex to disengage from the Alliance arrangement and the Commissioner has provided regular updates on partnership arrangements to secure the ongoing operation of these services. The Panel has been mindful to ensure that the OPCC has learnt lessons from the termination of the Alliance and that any future collaboration agreements take account of this learning.

Equalities and Diversity

The anger about the killing of George Floyd and its impact on our communities was felt world-wide. Coupled with concerns and anxieties following the release of Public Health England's report into the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities, the Panel's duty to challenge and tackle all aspects of discrimination and hate was brought into sharp focus. The Commissioner reported to the Panel on diversity within the force and, noting that BAME police officers were under-represented, the Panel sought a more in-depth understanding of the force's approach to tackle this issue.

The Panel subsequently received a comprehensive update on the work of the Positive Action Team, which had been developed to engage with BAME communities and encourage individuals to consider a career in policing. The presentation focussed on the Team's work to improve under-representation from BAME communities across the workforce, particularly among police officers. The

Panel are pleased to commend the work of the team and offer wholehearted support for the force's ambition to properly represent the community.

The Panel recognise that diversity has many facets and will continue to monitor this issue in its wider sense through the work of the Planning and Performance Working Group.

COVID-19

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, the Commissioner advised that his Police and Crime Plan covered the period up to 2021 which mitigated the urgency of producing an updated plan at short notice. Since that time, a COVID-19 Police and Crime Plan Supplement was issued by the Commissioner identifying measures to address the emerging crisis. This ongoing response and the financial impact of the crisis has been a subject of interest to the full Panel and the Budget Working Group.

The Panel has also received questions on the policing response to COVID-19 in our public question time sessions and subsequently requested a summary analysis of the force's COVID-19 phase 2 survey results around the public perceptions of policing which will feed into the Planning and Performance Working Group's future consideration of victim satisfaction rates and public confidence in policing.

Home Office Review of the Role of the Police and Crime Commissioner

In July 2020, the Home Office announced a two-part internal review into the role of Police and Crime Commissioners. Part One of the Review began in late July and collated views and evidence from stakeholders across policing, fire, and local government as well as voluntary and community organisations. The LGA was tasked with collating the views of Panels and the Panel submitted its response to the LGA's key research questions in August 2020.

The Home Secretary released an outline of recommendations following part one of the review in March 2021 (ahead of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May 2021). The Panel note proposed enhancements to the role of the Commissioner will have an impact on the resource of the OPCC, particularly through the mandated appointment of a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, and welcomes the proposed improvements to scrutiny through the development of a good governance training package for Police and Crime Panels.

A new Chief Executive for the OPCC

Following an announcement that Neil Hewison would retire early in 2021, the Panel received notification of the Commissioner's intended appointment to the role of Chief Executive. Subsequently, a confirmation hearing took place in October 2020 and the Panel unanimously voted to support the Commissioner's proposal to appoint Polly Reed to the position of Chief Executive. The Panel were impressed by Ms Reed's performance in the strange situation of being publicly 'interviewed' in a virtual

meeting and considered she would bring new strengths to the role due to her background in local government and with the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime.

The Panel also place on record thanks to Mr Hewison for his constructive approach to working with the Panel and look forward to building upon what is proving to be a productive relationship with Ms Reed.

Public Questions

Public questions provide the Panel with an opportunity to engage with the community and understand more about topics of concern, thereby informing our work programming activity. This year, the Panel welcomed questions covering a diverse range of topics, including speed limits to ensure safer walking and cycling, community engagement, policing Covid-19, and proposals for changes to the Domestic Abuse Unit.

Looking Forward

The year 2020/21 was a year unlike any other. The outbreak of COVID-19 took a terrible toll and continued to resurge throughout the year despite phenomenal efforts to control it. At the time of writing this report, England is emerging from Lockdown 3.0 and the vaccination programme is well underway, offering hope of a gradual return to normal.

Whilst the advantages of virtual meetings have been much vaunted, the legislation which permits them expired early in May 2021 and the Panel look forward to a return to face to face meetings (albeit socially distanced initially). It is hoped that new legislation will eventually allow - and technology will facilitate - a hybrid solution. The Panel also have a desire to take meetings back into the five districts of the County rather than remain centred in Warwick and the Panel looks forward to meeting more members of the public on our travels.

Police and Crime Commissioner elections took place across the country in May 2021 after being postponed due to COVID-19. Philip Secombe was returned to office as the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Panel look forward to developing our working relationship with him further.

One of the first tasks that the Panel must undertake in 2021/22 is to hold a public confirmation hearing and report to the Commissioner on his proposed appointment of a new Chief Constable, following the retirement of Martin Jelley QPM. The Police and Crime Panel express thanks to Mr Jelley for his service and wish him a long and happy retirement.

Throughout 2020/21, the Panel saw a reliance on reserves that the Commissioner and his office recognised must stop and the 2021/22 budget has been set to meet this challenge. The Budget Working Group will be closely monitoring the budget position, particularly in view of the transition of services, COVID-19 exposures, diminishing reserves, and savings targets. The Panel have also requested that the Commissioner provide a summary financial report in each of his future reports to the full Panel.

As the final elements of the transition from the Alliance with West Mercia fall into place and the collaboration agreements with West Midlands Police are formed, the Panel will be keeping a close eye on progress being made and the robustness of partnership working.

The second phase of the Home Office Review of the Role of the Police and Crime Commissioner will consult publicly on whether to mandate the transfer of fire and rescue authority functions to Police and Crime Commissioners in England and the Panel will seek to actively engage with any consultation that takes place.

Membership for 2021/22

There are 12 members of the Police and Crime Panel representing the six first and second tier authorities in Warwickshire as well as two independent members. The membership of the Panel is politically and geographically balanced. Each district or borough area is represented by one councillor from the district/ borough and a county councillor who represents an electoral division in that area. The number of seats allocated to the political parties is determined by the number of seats held by that party across all the authorities.

The two independent members are politically neutral and are appointed to the Panel for four-year terms.

The Panel wishes to convey its thanks to Mr Bob Malloy, whose second term as an independent member concluded at the beginning of December 2020. Mr Malloy had made an outstanding contribution to the work of the Panel from its outset in December 2012 and his knowledge and experience will be greatly missed.

In the autumn of 2020, the Panel commenced a robust recruitment process for a new independent member and several excellent candidates were considered for the role. After a thorough interview process, the recruitment panel were pleased to recommend the appointment of Mr Andrew Davies, who was duly appointed by the full Panel in November 2020.

The tenure of Mr Andy Davis was also due to end in May 2021 and, as a much valued member of the Panel, his request to serve a further four year term was unanimously supported in April 2021.

The Membership for 2021/22 is:

District and Borough Representatives

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| Councillor David Reilly | North Warwickshire Borough Council |
| Councillor Clare Golby | Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council |
| Councillor Derek Poole | Rugby Borough Council |
| Councillor Christopher Kettle | Stratford-on-Avon District Council |
| Councillor Ian Davison | Warwick District Council |

Warwickshire County Council Representatives

Councillor Barbara Brown
Councillor Jenny Fradgley
Councillor John Holland
Councillor Dave Humphreys
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher

Independent Members

Andy Davis
Andrew Davies

Get Involved

Listening to the views of local residents is an important part of the work of the Panel. All meetings are open to the public and anyone who lives or works in Warwickshire is welcome to submit a question to either the Panel or the Police and Crime Commissioner.

If you wish to submit a question, please submit it in writing at least three working days in advance of the meeting using the contact details below:

Email: democraticservices@warwickshire.gov.uk

Or

Post: Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel
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CV34 4RL