

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 6 April 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members

Councillor Christopher Kettle (Chair) (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Barbara Brown (Vice Chair) (Warwickshire County Council)
Mr Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Mr Andy Davis (Independent Member)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Dave Humphreys (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Sue Markham (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Derek Poole (Rugby Borough Council)

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)
Nic Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Legal and Democratic)

Others Present

David Carter, Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

1. General

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. He emphasised the importance of the relationship between the Police and Crime Panel and Police and Crime Commissioner. He highlighted the benefits of collaboration and mutual support to achieve the best possible outcomes for Warwickshire.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher; Councillor Sue Markham was present as a substitute.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Ian Davison, Councillor Clare Golby, Councillor John Holland, and Councillor Ray Jarvis.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There was none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) presented his report which provided an update on key activities since the meeting of the Panel in November 2023. He drew members' attention to coverage in the report of holding to account arrangements, financial considerations, procurement of commissioned services, and progress towards finalisation of awards for grants.

Andrew Davies highlighted the one-year anniversary of the opening of the Force's Operations Communications Centre at Stuart Ross House. He praised the work that had gone into establishing a modern call-handling facility and the benefits this had brought to Warwickshire. He highlighted the findings of the Baroness Casey Review and recent media coverage of serious shortcomings within the Metropolitan Police Service. He sought the Commissioner's reassurance that work was being undertaken to secure high standards of policing conduct in Warwickshire.

The Commissioner referred to commentary within the report relating to the Casey Review, stating that reports of misconduct, racism, sexism, and homophobia within the Metropolitan Police Service had damaged public confidence in policing nationally. There was a need to reinforce trust in policing, particularly for victims of crime. In Warwickshire, the Chief Constable had instigated a programme of re-vetting across the organisation. To date, no serious concerns had emerged. The Professional Standards Department was primed to respond to any cases, should they arise.

The Commissioner stated that as the national lead for vetting, the Chief Constable was well placed to respond to the issues currently affecting policing. He emphasised that vetting provided a snapshot of the individual at the time of checks being completed. Other activities would be undertaken across the Force to promote high standards of conduct including a reinforced whistleblowing policy and training on police ethics and integrity. He reported that the measures proposed by the Chief Constable to respond to national concerns relating to standards in policing had been scrutinised and found to be sufficiently robust.

The Commissioner advised that Warwickshire Police continued to conduct face-to-face interviews of new recruits which was not a practice followed by all police forces. This provided a better means to assess the character of applicants.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that the Force had established a Group to lead 'Operation Amethyst' which would oversee measures to reinforce standards of conduct. She would attend meetings of the Group on behalf of the OPCC. Operation Amethyst would also focus on

organisational culture and internal measures to promote whistleblowing. She added that, in tandem with re-vetting across the Force, OPCC staff had recently been re-vetted; there were no concerns.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that it would be possible to provide an update to the Panel once the re-vetting process had been completed. However, it would not be possible to share specific information should cases arise which required his independent adjudication. Therefore, a general overview would be given, providing an assessment of confidence.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, Polly Reed advised that vetting of officers was carried out independently by each police force. The Police National Database (PND) had been utilised to provide each police force with an indication of the number of records it could expect to receive. This gave an idea of the scale of the task for re-vetting. Warwickshire Police had been advised to expect approximately 10,000 records, requiring two members of staff to undertake the required work for a period of approximately six weeks. She expressed confidence that the Force was adequately resourced to complete this work.

In response to Andy Davis, the Commissioner stated that it was right to focus on the organisational culture of the Force. However, wider cultural and societal factors were also influential. Much depended on leadership, with senior officers setting the right example and communicating a clear message that misconduct would be dealt with seriously. He expressed confidence in the leadership culture of Warwickshire Police.

Polly Reed advised that customer service training would be provided to all outward-facing officers and staff. The training would include a focus on standards of behaviour which would contribute to securing the right organisational culture. She added that OPCC staff regularly visited different departments within the Force to observe and pick up information which could be used to support holding to account activities.

Andy Davis highlighted the importance of ensuring transparency in holding to account activities. This would provide reassurance to the public that action was being taken to uphold high standards of conduct alongside wider scrutiny of the Force by the Commissioner.

The Commissioner advised that the minutes of the weekly and monthly meetings held with the Chief Constable were available (in redacted form) on the PCC website. He re-emphasised his commitment to secure the best possible standards of behaviour within Warwickshire Police. Should racist, misogynistic, or homophobic behaviours be detected, swift action would be taken.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that the terms of the recently introduced 'Serious Violence Duty' placed an oversight role on PCCs to support local implementation of the duty to prevent and reduce serious violence. In Warwickshire, he would work closely with partnership organisations to achieve the best possible outcome. A Partnership Board had been established with the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner as vice-chair. The Commissioner and his office would seek to ensure that robust measures were in place and that funding was utilised effectively.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that the savings requirement of £1m for 2023/24 could be achieved by optimising recent investment in ICT systems without the need for

staff redundancies. An annual saving of £1m was also targeted for 2024/25 and 2025/26; the Commissioner advised that the Chief Constable had been asked to demonstrate how these savings could be achieved. He emphasised that it was not intended to deprive the Force of resources but rather to instil a focus on cost-effectiveness, resulting in a leaner organisation that maximised frontline operations.

The Commissioner announced that representations from borough and district councils had shown the financial burden associated with provision of CCTV. In response, he had determined to allocate funding of £10,000 to each borough and district council to secure improvements to CCTV systems. He highlighted the benefits of CCTV to the police, not only in detecting crime but also to provide evidence in court.

Members of the Panel expressed support for this initiative but highlighted the high costs associated with CCTV.

The Commissioner advised that the decision to allocate funding had been prompted in part by concerns that CCTV systems in some areas of the county were aging and required maintenance. He stated that PCCs did not have a statutory duty to fund CCTV; however, it was right to offer support, recognising the value of CCTV to policing in Warwickshire.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner acknowledged the benefits of off-road motorcycles to address anti-social behaviour. He advised that, within the Fleet Programme, priority was given to cars and other vehicles ahead of motorcycles. However, the importance of motorcycles had not been overlooked. Where it was possible, riders were deployed crack down on illegal off-roading. He agreed to explore the possibility of increasing the number of motorcycles available to officers.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that the new operating model for the Force (under the 'People' strand of the Empower Programme) would be implemented on 24 April 2023. As part of this process, the Rural Crime Team would be upgraded to its full staffing level of eight officers plus a sergeant and inspector.

Andy Davis stated that it was positive that the Force had achieved the uplift target of 1100 officers ahead of the 31 March 2023 deadline. Attention would be turned to recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). Recognising the current pressures affecting the labour market, he asked how this process could be supported to attract the best quality candidates.

The Commissioner advised that vetting checks would be undertaken for prospective PCSOs. He advised that there would be a continued focus on officer recruitment as well as PCSOs. Recruitment of an additional 100 officers was targeted in the next 12 months to ensure that the Force remained ahead of the required 1100 headcount. However, recruitment courses for PCSOs had also been scheduled. He provided an outline of the PCSO role which included a focus on problem solving in communities. Attention would be given to strategies to highlight the importance of the role of PCSOs in communities through engagement across local organisations, schools, parish councils, and online. He commented that most people who joined the Force were motivated by a desire to make a difference; this was highly relevant to PCSOs.

Polly Reed advised that, in common with police forces elsewhere, Warwickshire Police had commissioned an external company to promote opportunities to join the Force. There was scope

to undertake some additional promotional work targeted at PCSO recruitment. The Commissioner had sought a commitment from the Chief Constable to significantly raise the number of PCSOs. However, many PCSOs had made use of opportunities to progress to become police officers. There was now a national shortage of PCSOs.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner stated that there was an awareness within Warwickshire Police of the challenges associated with modern slavery and human trafficking. Officers were trained to spot the signs of modern slavery, such as coercive behaviour. The Force worked closely with the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) to address criminality in these areas. Additionally, the Commissioner reported that he had recently commissioned the new 'Independent Modern Slavery Advocate Service' (IMSA) which would focus on identifying and preventing modern slavery and human trafficking. Following a detailed tendering exercise, it had been resolved to work jointly with the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. He emphasised the importance of vigilance to ensure that opportunities to detect and prevent modern slavery were not missed.

The Commissioner provided an update on work being undertaken to improve the environmental sustainability of Warwickshire Police. This included:

- Installation of solar panels.
- Ordering of electric vehicle (EV) charging points – initially for Stuart Ross House in Warwick with the intention to install charging points more widely across the police estate.
- Replacement of boilers to improve energy efficiency.
- Installation of double-glazed windows at Police Headquarters, Leek Wootton.
- Roof insulation across the police estate to reduce energy consumption.
- Utilisation of building energy monitoring systems to reduce energy consumption.
- A working from home programme for staff to reduce journeys to and from the workplace.
- A pilot scheme to trial electric vehicles – however, there was an awareness that in some circumstances EVs were not yet suitable (i.e., for patrol officers).
- Waste recycling.
- Uniform recycling.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, the Commissioner advised that there was evidence of a reduction in electricity usage by the Force, demonstrating that the measures introduced to improve sustainability were effective. He added that the electricity used by the Force was derived from solely renewable sources.

There was discussion of approaches to measuring the carbon footprint of an organisation, and where there was scope to share knowledge, drawing on the progress made by local authorities to respond to climate change.

3. Report of the Planning and Performance Working Group

The Chair of the Planning and Performance Working Group, Andy Davis, provided an update of the Group's meeting on 9 March 2023. He advised that consideration had been given to:

- The Force's Vehicle Crime Strategy, to address a recent increase in vehicle crime.

- Integrated Offender Management processes, including intervention programmes and funding arrangements.
- Prevention initiatives within the Empower Programme.
- Arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), including where there was scope for learning across CSP activities. It had been agreed that the OPCC would coordinate a meeting to explore this subject in more detail following the borough and district council elections on 4 May 2023.

Andy Davis advised that there had been a specific focus on holding to account arrangements, including how the Commissioner's activities were informed by statistical analysis. There had also been discussion of the 'spotlight subjects' covered at monthly Governance and Performance Board meetings between the Commissioner and Chief Constable.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that the spotlight subjects provided a means to undertake detailed scrutiny of topical issues. However, she provided assurance that emerging issues, such as vetting, were also covered alongside regular scrutiny of staffing, budget, and financial matters.

(1) Domestic Abuse and Domestic Violence - Scoping

Andy Davis reported that the Group had also examined approaches to scrutiny of the PCC's holding to account of the Force for delivery of measures to address domestic abuse and domestic violence. He commented that the complexity of the subject area was such that it would be impracticable to undertake a comprehensive survey of all interventions to address domestic abuse and violence. Instead, the Group had resolved that attention should be focused on specific areas. This could be informed by a desktop analysis of data, taking account of the effect of repeat victimisation on statistics. There was also a need to recognise that, as a 'hidden crime', increased reporting of domestic abuse and violence could be interpreted as a measure of success, demonstrating that more victims felt confident to come forward. Discussion at the meeting had highlighted the PCC's role as a partnership facilitator, working across a range of agencies and boards to address domestic abuse and violence. The recommendation from the Group was to adopt a focused approach which would add value, support the PCC, and lead to practical positive outcomes.

The Commissioner stated that scrutiny by the Panel would be welcomed. He highlighted the harms caused by domestic abuse and violence, and the importance of providing support to victims. He outlined some of the measures in place, including funding of victims' services as well as a recently commissioned service with the Warwickshire-based charity, Safeline. He suggested that the Working Group consider meeting with some of the organisations that received PCC funding and offered the support of his Office to make the necessary arrangements.

4. College of Policing Consultation - Revised Code of Ethics

The Chair advised that the College of Policing had contacted the Police and Crime Panel to invite members to participate in its consultation on a revised Code of Ethics for Policing in England and Wales. He encouraged members to participate in the consultation either by utilising the link circulated by email or by sending responses to the Panel's Support Officer to enable a group response to be made.

5. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

No issues were raised by the CSPs.

Councillor Humphreys stated that there had been a noticeable increase in the number of Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) officers in North Warwickshire. He praised the recent progress made to disrupt county lines activities, stating that increased visible policing provided reassurance to residents.

6. Work Programme

The Panel noted the Work Programme.

7. Dates of Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings.

As the meeting due to be held on Thursday 16 November 2023 clashed with the date for a national conference, it was resolved to reschedule the meeting to 10am on Wednesday 22 November 2023.

As the meeting on due to be held on 4 April 2024 was likely to fall within the pre-election period for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in early May 2024, it was proposed to also reschedule this meeting. The Panel's Support Officer would contact attendees to arrange a suitable earlier date for the meeting.

8. Any Urgent Items

There was 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 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. Complaints

It was confirmed that no complaints had been received since the last meeting.

The meeting rose at 15:22.


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Chair

