

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 22 June 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members

Andy Davis (Chair) (Independent Member)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)
Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Councillor Natalie Gist (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Clare Golby (Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor Dave Humphreys (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Katie Hunt (Warwick District Council)
Councillor Ray Jarvis (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)

Officers

Lucy Adams, Team Lead, Senior Solicitor, Planning and Litigation
Samantha Alexander, Trainee Solicitor
John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Delivery Lead, Commercial and Regulatory
Virginia Rennie, Head of Strategic Finance

Others Present

John Anderson, Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Richard Culley (Public Speaker)
Emma Daniell, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Councillor Keith Kondakor (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) (Public Speaker)
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Appointment of Chair to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Councillor Derek Poole nominated Mr Andy Davis to serve as Chair for the coming year. Councillor Dave Humphreys seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations and Mr Andy Davis was elected unanimously as Chair to the Police and Crime Panel for 2023/24.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Councillor Dave Humphreys nominated Councillor Derek Poole to serve as Vice-Chair for the coming year. Councillor Ray Jarvis seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations and Councillor Derek Poole was elected unanimously as Vice-Chair to the Police and Crime Panel for 2023/24.

3. General

The Chair expressed his thanks to fellow members of the Panel following his appointment, stating that he would seek to work collaboratively, positively, and proactively with the Police and Crime Commissioner and his staff over the coming year.

The Chair welcomed two new members to the Panel – Councillor Natalie Gist of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Councillor Katie Hunt of Warwick District Council.

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Barbara Brown and Councillor Jenny Fradgley.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There was none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

(4) Public Speaking

Councillor Keith Kondakor (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council) was welcomed to the meeting and invited to put his question to the Panel and Commissioner.

Councillor Kondakor highlighted the seriousness of bicycle theft. He stated that since 2010, funding cuts had intensified pressure on the police service and Criminal Justice System. This was evident in the performance of the 101 Service. He commented that fewer crimes were being reported due to a loss of confidence by some residents that action would be taken.

Councillor Kondakor stated that figures published by the Ministry of Justice indicated that there had been no convictions for bicycle theft in Warwickshire over the past three years. For some members of the public, there was a feeling that the Force was not interested in pursuing theft of a bicycle, leading many to resort to social media platforms to attempt to recover their property. He stated that a bicycle provided a sole means of transport for many people. Even when insured, it could be very difficult to recoup the cost of a stolen bicycle. He asked the Commissioner how action could be taken to seek an improvement.

The Commissioner thanked Councillor Kondakor for his question. He advised that the recently established customer resolution centres at Nuneaton, Rugby, Leamington Spa, and Stratford-upon-Avon were open seven days a week, providing an opportunity for members of the public to access help and advice from a police officer. He stated that the number of 999 and 101 calls received by Warwickshire Police had continued to increase. In the past week, the Force had received more than 5,000 calls to 999 and 101. This was a record-breaking level of demand. It demonstrated that members of the public continued to see reporting of crime as

being worthwhile.

The Commissioner advised that operational changes had been made to improve response times for calls to 101 during periods of high demand; 10 new call handlers had been recruited with funding allocated to secure the appointment of an additional 15. This would substantially increase the Control Room's capacity to respond to calls. He emphasised that 999 calls were being responded to promptly; on average it took 6 seconds for a call to 999 to be answered.

The Commissioner advised that Warwickshire Police data showed a different picture to that of the Ministry of Justice figures. During the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, 22 people had been charged or summonsed for bicycle theft. There had been 20 convictions, including three individuals who had been convicted of multiple bicycle thefts. Since 2018/19, there had been a 37% decrease in reported bicycle theft offences in Warwickshire. He emphasised that the Force would continue to pursue a positive outcome when theft of a bicycle was reported.

Councillor Kondakor stated that it was positive that victims of crime now had improved opportunities to contact the police at customer resolution centres. He suggested that efforts be made to promote these resources and to signpost members of the public to the options available to them to report crimes. Where there were known hotspots for bicycle theft, he suggested that efforts be made to target resources to seek an improvement.

Mr Richard Culley was welcomed to the meeting and invited to put his question to the Panel and Commissioner.

Mr Culley highlighted the harms caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB), stating that the Government's recently published Anti-social Behaviour Action Plan set out proposals to support police and crime commissioners, local councils, and housing associations to target ASB in their communities. He stated that ASB could take many forms but one of its most problematic manifestations was the use and dealing of drugs, particularly heroin and crack cocaine. He highlighted the blight on communities of discarded hypodermic needles, persistent noise late at night, and fly-tipping in communal areas. As a result, residents experienced fear, intimidation, and isolation. He stated that victims of ASB had the option of raising the community trigger, but this did not always achieve a resolution. He relayed his recent experience of the community trigger process and expressed disappointment at the outcome. He outlined concerns relating to the appeals process. He emphasised his view that more needed to be done by the Force to respond to ASB and drug-related criminality.

The Commissioner advised that a community trigger case review required the input of partnership organisations including the police, local authorities, and relevant housing association. For a case to be upheld, it was necessary to satisfy specific criteria. These had not been met in the case referred to by Mr Culley. He stated that there had been considerable interaction between partnership organisations and expressed confidence that a robust process of engagement had been followed prior to a decision being made. Several meetings had been held, including a meeting with community safety partners, to agree a way of working and approaches to manage relations. An action plan was now in place. The Housing Association had agreed to rectify issues associated with CCTV. Following engagement, no grounds had been found to uphold the appeal. He recognised that this was not Mr Culley's desired outcome. However, he provided assurance that the correct process had been followed and the role of the PCC had been properly discharged.

In response, Mr Culley stated that communication between partnership organisations had been poor since the initial ASB Case Review. It had been necessary for him to liaise with each party individually and information had been difficult to obtain. Action had recently been taken by the Force; however, it had been a long and painful process.

The Commissioner emphasised that ASB and drug dealing were treated with seriousness by Warwickshire Police. There had been considerable activity by the Force to disrupt serious and organised crime gangs in Stratford-upon-Avon and elsewhere. He underlined that it was not acceptable for drug dealing to occur in Stratford-upon-Avon or anywhere else.

4. 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 April 2023. The Report encompassed trust and confidence in the police service, progress to deliver the Police and Crime Plan, criminal justice considerations, the recently published His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Annual State of Policing Assessment, grants and commissioned services, financial information, and details of the arrival of the Knife Angel sculpture to Nuneaton town centre. He praised the contribution of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council which worked alongside Warwickshire Police and others to coordinate the arrival of the Knife Angel.

Councillor Golby stated that the Knife Angel showed how local communities could take creative approaches to focus on preventing violence and aggression. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council had taken the initiative to do things differently. She stated that securing the Knife Angel had been a significant achievement. The arrival of the sculpture presented multiple benefits. Educational initiatives had taken place in schools, it had attracted an increased number of visitors to the town and facilitated a dialogue on the harms of knife crime. She praised the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) who had made a valuable contribution.

The Commissioner stated that the Knife Angel provided an effective means to prompt discussion of the harms of knife crime. It also provided a powerful and poignant memorial to those who had lost their lives to knife crime.

The Chair highlighted coverage in the report of the HMICFRS Annual State of Policing Assessment. The update provided to the Panel summarised that the Chief Inspector of Constabulary had emphasised the need for police forces to “show professionalism, get the basics right when it comes to investigating crime, and respond properly when someone dials 999. This is what matters most to the communities they serve, and this is the way forward for the police to regain the public’s trust”. He sought the Commissioner’s view of this statement.

The Commissioner stated that the Annual State of Policing Assessment examined national issues affecting policing; it was right that detailed consideration had been given to public expectations for policing. He emphasised that public confidence in policing was a core consideration; where this faltered, there was a risk that crimes would not be reported. He underlined his intention to increase confidence in Warwickshire Police and prove to victims and witnesses that reporting of crime would yield positive results.

5. Annual Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner 2022/23

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced his Annual Report which outlined activities and progress over the course of 2022/23. He emphasised that the Report was framed against the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan to ensure that progress could be effectively tracked. The Report also included details of engagement activities, commissioned services and grants, financial considerations, governance arrangements, and the findings of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its most recent Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) Inspection of Warwickshire Police. He emphasised that the findings of the Inspectorate constituted an improvement on the results of the previous inspection. He would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to address the areas identified by HMICFRS as requiring improvement. He reported that the next inspection was anticipated to occur in January 2025.

In response to Councillor Gist, the Commissioner highlighted the substantial expansion of Warwickshire Police in recent years. Since 2016, officer numbers had increased by over 300, bringing the total number of officers to just over 1,100. This had been partly financed by the national Police Uplift Grant as well as by Warwickshire council taxpayers. He emphasised that, in raising the police precept for 2023/24, he had made a commitment to expand the Force and ensure that officers were deployed evenly across the County by population, demand, and levels of crime (taking account of operational considerations such as firearms officers who had a central base). Under the Empower Programme, a new geographically-based policing model had been introduced with command centres in the north, east, and south of the County each overseen by a Chief Inspector. These chief inspectors were well-placed to liaise with local councillors to address community concerns.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner advised that, on average, between 8 and 10 officers left the Force each month. This was usually due to retirement. To maintain officer numbers, it was necessary to recruit approximately 100 new officers each year.

The Chair praised the level of detail included within the report. However, he highlighted that the Panel had previously received a more detailed overview of the Force's performance, particularly in relation to key activities and priorities. In recent update reports, performance data had been less specific with a greater emphasis placed on governance arrangements and processes that shaped how the Force operated. He stated that a renewed focus on performance would help the Panel to develop a clearer idea of how strategic initiatives were operating in practice.

The Commissioner stated that this was a reasonable request. However, he emphasised the importance of establishing clear lines of demarcation between the role of the Panel and the role of the PCC. Performance data would be included in future reports to inform the Panel's analysis of his holding to account of the Chief Constable in relation to the performance of Warwickshire Police. He advised that performance data was also published on the PCC website.

The Chair stated that this would be helpful. He highlighted the role of the Planning & Performance Working Group which provided a means to focus on specific performance-related matters in detail, enabling full Panel meetings to take a broader strategic overview.

The Chair highlighted the table on page 29 of the Annual Report which showed the OPCC's assessment of Police and Crime Plan success measures across priority and sub-focus areas. Red,

Amber and Green (RAG) ratings showed most areas as Amber. 'Improved Communication' and 'Justice Outcomes' had been set as Red.

The Commissioner described the methodology used to determine RAG ratings, stating that 'justice outcomes' had been marked as Red due to backlogs in the courts system. It had also been considered that 'improved communication' was required between justice partners. Attention would be focused on these areas. This could be facilitated by the Local Criminal Justice Board which was chaired by the PCC and attended by representatives of partnership organisations.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that the Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025 was approximately three-quarters of the way through its lifespan. The aim was to achieve an increased proportion of Green-rated success measures as the Plan approached its conclusion. RAG ratings were determined by a series of complex spreadsheets devised to analyse progress against Police and Crime Plan objectives. Analysis was undertaken to determine appropriate remedial actions.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that the requirement for the Force to make efficiency savings of £3m over a three-year period could be achieved in a variety of ways. The Chief Constable had discretion to deliver the full amount of savings in a single year or over a longer period. He stated that there were some obvious areas where savings could be achieved. For example, there had been substantial recent investment in ICT which had led to improved efficiencies. The Force had been asked to provide a detailed plan showing how the savings would be achieved. This would soon be provided.

The Commissioner advised that income derived from the Commercial Vetting Service was regularly monitored. The budget for 2023/24 was not dependent on income from the Vetting Service. Instead, surplus from commercial activities could be allocated to capital expenditure. This was advantageous as national funding for capital projects was no longer provided. Revenue could also be allocated to borrowing to pay off interest on loans. He advised that there was an earmarked reserve to cover any risks associated with the Vetting Service. He expressed confidence in the measures in place to scrutinise the Force's finances. He would continue to provide regular updates to the Panel.

Polly Reed advised that the OPCC was a member of the Vetting Management Board which was chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable. The Board paid close attention to projected levels of income and expenditure. Consideration had also been given to ways to collect income more efficiently, reducing overheads. This was consistent with an emphasis across the Force on business development. She expressed confidence in the Vetting Management Board, stating that it was supported by competent individuals and focused on the right areas.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner advised that policing of the protests at Kingsbury Oil Terminal had required significant expenditure. Mutual Aid costs had been incurred to call in specialist teams. He expressed confidence that policing of the protests had been undertaken in a reasonable and humane way. He advised that, to be eligible for a special grant from the Home Office, the Force would need to incur costs for policing of a specific incident equivalent to 1% of net revenue expenditure. Policing of the protests at Kingsbury Oil Terminal had not exceeded this threshold. However, on-going costs would continue to be monitored. The Force also held a general reserve to respond to unforeseen events.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner, and the Panel noted the Annual Report for 2022/23.

6. Joint Audit and Standards Committee Annual Report 2022

Mr John Anderson (Chair of Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee) introduced the Joint Audit and Standards Committee (JASC) Annual Report for 2022. He provided a summary of highlights from the report, stating that:

- At its meeting in November 2022, WJASC considered the joint external audit unqualified opinions on statutory accounts and value for money arrangements. These documents were formally signed off by management and the external auditors shortly afterwards. This constituted a significant achievement given current pressures affecting the audit sector nationally.
- WJASC was provided with information relating to the process for appointment of external auditors to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable for the five-year period from 2024 to 2028. The Committee recommended that Grant Thornton be re-appointed as the external auditor and highlighted the effect of change fatigue on the Finance Department. The Committee's observations were relayed to Public Sector Audit Appointment Ltd (PSAA); however, it was resolved that Azets Audit Services Ltd be appointed as the external auditor. Since then, two senior auditors had moved from Grant Thornton to Azets Audit Services which mitigated some of the concerns raised by WJASC, providing improved continuity.
- The Committee took a close interest in risks associated with the transition of services following the termination of the strategic alliance between Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police. These included the development of the Evolve ICT Project. The closure report for the Project showed that it had been completed on time and on budget. This was rare for projects of this type and constituted a good outcome.

Mr Anderson described the key areas of focus for 2023/24, these included performance management and accountability, vetting, cyber-crime, and fraud and corruption.

The Chair highlighted the benefits of alignment between the Panel and WJASC. It was helpful to share information and for a member of WJASC to be present at Panel meetings. He thanked Mr Anderson and his colleagues on the JASC for their support and dedication.

The Panel noted the WJASC Annual Report.

7. Working Groups 2023/24

The Chair introduced the report, stating that the Panel was asked to confirm the continuation of dedicated working groups in 2023/24. Provided this was agreed, the membership of each group would be updated, and priorities would be set for the coming year. He stated that the OPCC's support of the working groups in 2022/23 had been valued and appreciated.

The Commissioner stated that he would be happy to meet with the chairs of the working groups, once appointed, to discuss arrangements and how meetings could be supported by his office.

Resolved:

That the Police and Crime Panel confirms the continuation of dedicated working groups for the 2023/24 municipal year and authorises the Panel's Support Officer to confirm arrangements for working groups, and appointments thereto, following liaison with Panel members.

8. Annual Report of the Police and Crime Panel 2022/23

The Chair introduced the Annual Report which provided a summary of the Panel's activities and achievements during 2022/23 and priorities for the municipal year ahead.

It was resolved to endorse the Annual Report.

9. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

No issues had been raised by Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) ahead of the meeting.

In response to Councillor Poole, Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that a meeting would be arranged between CSP chairs and the OPCC. She advised that consideration had been given to prospective points for discussion. She encouraged CSP chairs to raise any points that they would like to be discussed.

10. Work Programme

The Panel noted the Work Programme.

The Chair suggested that the Work Programme be reviewed once arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships and the Panel's working groups had been confirmed. He encouraged members to suggest any items that they would like to be included.

11. Dates of Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings.

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.

12. Any Urgent Items

There was none.

13. 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.

14. Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

15. Complaints

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

The meeting rose at 15:14.

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Chair

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