

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 21 September 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 Ray Jarvis (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Nic Conway, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Senior Solicitor – Delivery Lead, Commercial and Regulatory

Others Present

Emma Daniell, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Cara Giacalone, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Helen Knee, Warwickshire Joint Audit and Standards Committee
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Dr Denise Taylor (Public Speaker)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Barbara Brown, Councillor Jenny Fradgley and Councillor Katie Hunt.

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There was none.

(3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair highlighted discussion of vetting and standards of police conduct at the previous meeting. He sought an update from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

The PCC advised that all Warwickshire Police officers had now been re-vetted. This process had highlighted some issues which would be investigated. However, the results of re-vetting had been generally positive. A report had recently been provided by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which graded the Force's vetting processes as 'adequate'. The Inspectorate had recommended specific improvements, some of which had already been implemented.

It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

Dr Denise Taylor was welcomed to the meeting and invited to put her question to the Panel and Commissioner.

Dr Taylor highlighted the importance of standards of police conduct, community safety and transparency, stating that in December 2022, Warwickshire Police had issued a Community Protection Notice (CPN) on the Warwickshire Hunt on the grounds of "anti-social use of the county road network" following concerns about road safety, trespassing, anti-social behaviour, and illegal use of quad bikes. This had followed a warning notice issued on 14 May 2022 which noted "unreasonable and dangerous use of the roads" by the Hunt.

Dr Taylor stated that the conditions of the CPN required Warwickshire Hunt to give advanced notice of its events with details of the times and locations of crossing points. The CPN had also specified that the Hunt inform the Rural Crime Team of how hounds would be controlled and to notify its members of their responsibilities around designated crossing points. She emphasised that it had been clearly stated that a breach of these conditions would amount to a criminal offence.

Dr Taylor stated that the CPN had since been withdrawn prior to a court appeal scheduled for 15 August 2023. She stated that this raised serious concerns, and the circumstances of the withdrawal of the CPN had not been transparently explained to the public. Since then, the media had reported that a privately agreed protocol was in place between the Force and Warwickshire Hunt seemingly in place of the withdrawn CPN. She stated that the confidential nature of this protocol had the effect of fuelling community distrust. She emphasised that, unlike the CPN, the protocol was not enforceable in law.

Dr Taylor asked that attention be given to making the protocol publicly available in the interests of community trust and safety. Additionally, she asked what actionable and enforceable steps would be taken by Warwickshire Police to ensure that the Hunt abided by road safety regulations and community protection guidelines in future.

Councillor Poole moved that the question be referred to the PCC. This was seconded by Councillor Jarvis and agreed unanimously by the Panel.

The Commissioner thanked Dr Taylor for her questions, stating that the nature of the PCC's role meant that he was unable to become involved in operational matters – the activities of officers came under the direction and control of the Chief Constable. He advised that he had sought information from the Force to provide a response. He advised that Warwickshire

Police had issued a public statement concerning arrangements for the Warwickshire Hunt. This could be viewed on the Force's website. He advised that a CPN had been issued by the Force outlining road safety concerns. The Hunt had exercised its right to appeal. During this process, the Force had met with members of the Warwickshire Hunt and agreed a different approach, resulting in a protocol between Warwickshire Police and Hunt. This document had been classified as exempt from publication under Section 32 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

In respect of the actions to be taken by Warwickshire Police to ensure adherence by the Hunt to road safety regulations and community protection guidelines, the Commissioner advised that the Force had confirmed that it would continue to respond to calls to deal with any incidents that may arise. He emphasised that this was a civil matter – Warwickshire Hunt had accepted and understood community concerns relating to road safety and was keen to work with all parties to manage these concerns.

In response, Dr Taylor stated that the Hunt continued to be active several days a week, making use of public roads. There was no indication that the Hunt had made changes following agreement of the protocol. This meant that serious concerns relating to public safety remained unresolved.

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 June 2023. He stated that the report included details of activities by the Force to promote sustainability including installation of solar panels, EV charging facilities, new boilers, and double glazing across the police estate. He stated that there was more work to be done in this area and a programme was being developed which included the prospect of an electric vehicle pilot scheme.

In respect of police officer numbers, the Commissioner advised that the latest figures showed that the Force now had 1,117 officers. This meant that Warwickshire Police was on course to meet Police Uplift Programme targets which would be measured at the end of September 2023.

The Commissioner reported that a 101 triage pilot scheme had been introduced. This had shown good early results and the average waiting time for a 101 call was now approximately one minute. The new system improved the capability of the Force to direct calls to other agencies where necessary. For example, referral of mental health matters to the Mental Health Partnership. The triage initiative presented an effective means to manage demand and its progress would continue to be monitored.

The Commissioner reported that the 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) initiative was proposed as a partnership agreement between the Force and health and social care partners to manage mental health-related calls for service. This initiative had been devised to ensure that an individual experiencing mental health issues could be treated as soon as possible by a professional mental health nurse. However, he emphasised that the introduction of RCRP did not mean that police officers would neglect their duty to help those in distress.

The Commissioner reported that the Victims and Prisoners Bill was progressing through the Parliamentary process. This included a proposed updated statutory code for the treatment of

victims of crime. He advised that Warwickshire operated a Victims Charter which encompassed many of the principles of the proposed new statutory code. This would remain in place. Positive victim and witness outcomes would also be supported by the addition of three Crown Courts in Warwickshire (taking the total to seven active courtrooms) which would help to reduce the previously reported Crown Court backlog.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that set procedures were followed by the Force in the event of a homicide. He emphasised that homicide was treated as a high priority by Warwickshire Police, 'reducing murder and other homicides' was also a key priority of the Government's Beating Crime Plan. He advised that specific attention was given to homicide during 'holding to account' activities between the PCC and Chief Constable including a focus on how improvements could be made, not only in reacting and responding to homicides but also in the delivery of prevention initiatives.

It was resolved that the Panel would revisit this subject at a future meeting to examine the specific areas of good practice adopted by the Force to respond to homicide.

In response to Councillor Golby, the Commissioner stated that 'holding to account' of the Force was fundamental to his role as PCC. In many instances, scrutiny was informed by points raised by Warwickshire residents. Each week, a meeting was held with senior police officers to examine current issues. A meeting of the Governance and Performance Board (GPB) was held each month which included in-depth scrutiny of a specific topic. He recognised that crimes were often perpetrated by individuals coming from outside of Warwickshire. For this reason, it was necessary to work closely with adjoining police forces. In the West Midlands region, this was supported by the Regional Organised Crime Unit which focused specifically on cross-border offences. Effective arrangements were also in place with other neighbouring forces to facilitate joint operations.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner underlined the importance of taking steps to improve sustainability and reduce emissions in line with the national commitment to achieve net zero carbon by 2050. He stated that there was an increased focus on sustainability which would be facilitated by the 'Place' pillar of the Empower Programme. This would look specifically at management of the police estate. Any renovation of buildings would be done in a way that prioritised sustainability. However, he emphasised the scale of the challenge, particularly in specific areas such as transitioning to electric vehicles.

The Chair stated that a detailed update of sustainability-related matters at the Panel's next meeting would be welcomed.

Councillor Gist stated that there had been increased reports from residents in Stratford District of anti-social behaviour (ASB) including disturbances caused by motorcyclists late at night. She stated that this was often a difficult problem to resolve and sought the PCC's view of how progress could be made.

The Commissioner stated that he had also received reports of ASB from residents of Stratford District. He highlighted the options available to residents to address ASB including engagement with the District Council to pursue a Community Resolution. He encouraged residents to report instances of disruption caused by motorcyclists late at night. This would enable the Force to gather intelligence to respond effectively. He highlighted that Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) were in place to engage with communities to address ASB.

In response to the Chair, Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) agreed that future update reports would include a section focusing on the delivery of measures to address ASB as a priority of the Police and Crime Plan (alongside details of partnership working arrangements to tackle ASB).

Councillor Jarvis highlighted the problem of ASB including disturbances caused by motorcyclists late at night which also affected communities in North Warwickshire. However, he stated that many residents did not report instances of ASB due to the long waiting times experienced when contacting 101. He queried how the average one-minute waiting time for 101 calls had been determined as this did not tally with feedback he had received from residents.

The Commissioner agreed that there was a need to encourage residents to report crime and ASB. He advised that 101 waiting times were calculated using a verifiable methodology. He offered to provide the Panel with details of how waiting times were calculated at a future meeting. He emphasised that the number of calls received by the Force had continued to increase. It was now close to 6,000 calls per week. This was why funding had been allocated to appoint 15 additional call handlers in 2023/24.

The Chair stated that it was encouraging to see that upgrades had been made to the 101 Service. The Planning and Performance Working Group had set 101 communications as an area of ongoing focus – this would provide a means to examine the impact of recent changes in more detail.

In response to Councillor Pandher, the Commissioner advised that the proportion of officers from ethnic minorities joining the Force was below the targeted level. However, it was common for any new recruitment course to include at least one individual from an ethnic minority background. The Force had taken steps to engage with ethnic minority communities to promote opportunities to young people.

Polly Reed reported that figures from March 2023 showed that 5.66% of police officers, 7.08% of staff, and 8.2% of special constables were minority ethnic. Overall, this was 6.3% of the workforce.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). At present, the Force was seeking to recruit an additional 18 PCSOs to reach the targeted headcount. A course had been scheduled in October 2023 which was anticipated to bring in 12 new PCSOs. He highlighted the challenges for recruitment of PCSOs, this was exacerbated by movement between roles as it was common for PCSOs to opt to retrain as police officers. He emphasised that recruitment of PCSOs was a priority and frequently discussed with the Chief Constable.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that the Force was financially resilient. Warwickshire Police held over £15m in reserves. However, he emphasised that taxpayers' money needed to be used efficiently. For this reason, he had agreed with the Chief Constable that savings of £3m would be made over a three-year period. It was proposed that this would be divided evenly across the three years. This year, the Force was comfortably on course to achieve savings of £1m as recent investment in ICT had delivered improved efficiency.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner provided an update on the Empower Change Programme, stating that a review of the 'People' pillar of the Programme would be undertaken, an update would be available later in the year. Under 'Place', no significant disposals of the Force

estate were proposed. However, improvements to buildings and offices were required. A budget of approximately £10m had been set aside for maintenance work. This would be a capital spend to save revenue expenditure. For example, energy costs would be brought down by the installation of double glazing. Meetings with the Force were held regularly to monitor Empower and its associated costs.

The Chair highlighted the potential advantages of the RCRP initiative and the partnership arrangements in place to ensure that vulnerable individuals received the right care. However, it would be necessary to make certain that the scheme was properly set up so that those affected were not left unsupported between service providers.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) stated that considerable attention had been given to ensuring that robust arrangements were in place to make certain that vulnerable individuals received the right care. A working group had been established to secure an understanding between partnership organisations, rather than there being a withdrawal of police support without adequate involvement by others.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner stated that the courts system was controlled by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). The MoJ was represented on the Criminal Justice Board. He recognised that specific challenges affected the Criminal Justice System, and these had been raised with the MoJ. He stated that the Force had been encouraged to make use of out of court disposals, where appropriate, which would help to reduce the backlog of court cases. He acknowledged the impact that delays in the courts had on victims and witnesses. It was an ongoing area of focus.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that since 1 April 2023, 11 police complaint reviews had been completed, five of which had been upheld. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that complaints were handled properly with an independent mindset. Within the OPCC, there was in-house expertise to facilitate this process. Where necessary, an independent law firm would also be consulted. He stated that meetings were held with the Force's Head of Professional Standards to examine the details of specific complaints as well as broader trends.

In response to Councillor Humphreys, the Commissioner stated that consideration had been given to policing requirements in North Warwickshire and that concerns relating to response times were treated with seriousness. The introduction of a patrol base at Coleshill had led to an improvement. He affirmed his long-term aspiration for an additional patrol base to be established in Atherstone, this was a matter frequently raised during discussion with the Chief Constable.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner stated that the recommendations emerging from the Panel's 2019/20 Review of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Funding of Substance Misuse Services would be taken into consideration when developing the specification for recommissioning of drug and alcohol services in the months ahead.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that expenditure on capital schemes was forecast to be £10.673m against a total budget of £12.644m, including slippage from 2022/23. There were multiple reasons for this, including ongoing difficulties in obtaining certain materials and delays associated with planning permission for building work. As a result, there could be slippage of schemes from year to year. However, capital spending of £10.673m was positive and would lead to reduced revenue expenditure. He emphasised that a capital grant was no longer

provided by central government. Therefore, it was necessary to achieve a balance between selling an asset or borrowing to fund capital projects.

In response to the Chair, the Commissioner advised that planning for the 2024/25 Budget was underway. Attention had been given to specific challenges such as the 7% pay increase for police officers. This would be mostly financed by the Home Office in the year ahead, but it would be necessary to take account of future implications for pay costs. He stated that the Panel's input on budget planning would be heeded. However, setting the budget required his judgment to determine what the Force required to keep Warwickshire safe as well as the amount that could reasonably be asked of Warwickshire taxpayers.

3. Appointments to the Planning & Performance Working Group

The Chair introduced the report, stating that the Panel was asked to note the membership of the Planning and Performance Working Group for 2023/24 and confirm Group's Terms of Reference for 2023/24 as set out in the report.

Councillor Poole moved that the recommendations be accepted. This was seconded by Councillor Humphreys and agreed unanimously by the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Police and Crime Panel:

1. Notes the membership of the Planning and Performance Working Group for 2023/24.
2. Confirms the Planning and Performance Working Group's Terms of Reference for 2023/24

4. Report of the Planning & Performance Working Group

John Cole (Senior Democratic Services Officer) provided a summary of the Working Group's activities since the last meeting of the Panel, including meetings on 27 July and 19 September 2023. He reported that Councillor Barbara Brown had been appointed as the Group's Chair for the year ahead.

John Cole reported that at its meeting in July, the Group had given detailed attention to cyber and digital crime. The Group had also received a report looking at vetting processes and how these were monitored by the PCC. It was considered that the report provided reassurance that vetting by Warwickshire Police was undertaken to a good standard. In its analysis, the Group noted that there were clear links between organisational culture, standards of conduct, and vetting.

John Cole reported that at its meeting in September, the Group had examined the recent Force Scrutiny Report which provided an overview of Warwickshire Police's performance during Quarter 1, 2023/24. In its analysis, the Group paid specific attention to knife crime, prevention measures to address pickpocketing, progress by the Force to address vehicle crime, victim satisfaction rates, and recent changes to the 101 Service. The Group also received a report on Burglary Detection Rates. It had been decided to focus on Environmental Sustainability at the Group's next meeting on 8 November 2023.

5. 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) expressed support for a meeting to be held between the OPCC and CSP chairs. She stated that consideration had been given to a range of potential discussion topics which could be shared ahead of the meeting.

The Chair expressed support for this approach, stating that the meeting would be well timed following the appointment of new CSP chairs during the summer. He highlighted that a report looking at the role of CSPs was scheduled at the Panel's next meeting on 22 November 2023. He suggested that the meeting between the OPCC and CSP chairs occur prior to this date so that its findings could feed into broader discussion of CSPs.

6. Work Programme

The Panel noted the Work Programme.

The Chair highlighted that attention would be given to future arrangements for the Panel's working groups which would inform development of the Work Programme.

There was discussion of the Chief Constable's address to the Panel. In January 2023, a visit to Stuart Ross House had been arranged allowing the Panel to meet the Chief Constable and senior leadership team of the Force. This had proved to be informative, and consideration would be given to the prospect of holding a similar event as an alternative to a formal address by the Chief Constable.

7. Dates of Meetings

The Panel noted the dates of future meetings.

8. Any Urgent Items

There was none.

9. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

As there were no complaints to consider, there was no requirement to enter confidential session.

10. Complaints

There was none.

The meeting rose at 15.30.

A Dawg

.....
Chair