

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Wednesday 22 November 2023

Minutes

Attendance

Panel Members

Andy Davis (Chair) (Independent Member)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)
Councillor Barbara Brown (Warwickshire County Council)
Andrew Davies (Independent Member)
Councillor Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Natalie Gist (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Clare Golby (Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council)
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher (Warwickshire County Council)
Councillor Jim Sinnott (Warwick District Council)

Officers

John Cole, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Caroline Gutteridge, Senior Solicitor – Delivery Lead, Commercial and Regulatory
Virginia Rennie, Head of Strategic Finance

Others Present

Emma Daniell, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Martina Irwin (Public Speaker)
Polly Reed, Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
Philip Seccombe, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner
Denise Taylor (Public Speaker)

1. General

The Chair welcomed Councillor Jim Sinnott to the Panel as the new representative of Warwick District Council.

The Chair reported that he had recently attended the National Conference for Police (Fire) and Crime Panels where there had been discussion between panels of approaches to address key issues of national importance, including vetting. There was an opportunity to gather panels' findings into a central resource. This could be supported by the National Association of Police (Fire) and Crime Panels (NAPFCP).

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Dave Humphreys and Councillor Ray Jarvis.

(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 21 September 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

Dr Denise Taylor and Ms Martina Irwin were welcomed to the meeting and invited to put their questions to the Panel and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).

Dr Taylor highlighted the importance of effective policing of the Warwickshire Hunt, which since August 2023 had been active several times a week. She stated that Warwickshire Police had issued a Community Protection Notice (CPN) on the Warwickshire Hunt on the grounds of anti-social behaviour and disregard of road safety. In August 2023, the Force had withdrawn the CPN in favour of a privately agreed protocol. Requests for details to be disclosed had been refused on the grounds that the protocol had been classified as exempt from publication under Section 32 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Dr Taylor stated that, since mid-August 2023, evidence had been submitted by hunt monitors, wildlife groups, and others showing that Warwickshire Hunt continued to act unlawfully by disrupting traffic and trespassing on gardens and private land. She stated that trackers had been unlawfully placed on hunt monitors' vehicles with one female monitor being actively and illegally stalked.

Dr Taylor stated that the agreement between the Force and Warwickshire Hunt specified that the Hunt ensure that hounds be kept under control and that road safety training be provided to members of the Hunt. Filmed evidence submitted to Warwickshire Police showed that these conditions were not being followed. Several official complaints had been submitted to the Chief Constable and PCC. She stated that these complaints had not been adequately addressed with standard letters being issued using the instrument of Section 32 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Dr Taylor stated that Warwickshire Hunt continued to act with impunity. This suggested that the private arrangement between the Force and Warwickshire Hunt was ineffective. She requested that the Panel seek assurance from the PCC that measures were in place to ensure the effective policing of Warwickshire Hunt in relation to community protection and road safety. She asked that the Panel request that the PCC clarify what action would be taken to address official complaints submitted to the Force in relation to Warwickshire Hunt's activities.

Ms Irwin stated that her question was on behalf of concerned members of the public, including West Midlands Hunt Saboteurs and their followers. She emphasised that the actions of Warwickshire Hunt had attracted widespread public interest. She stated that hunt monitors had recently been told by police officers to leave a public highway and threatened with breaching the peace. She requested that the Panel seek the Commissioner's view of what

action should be taken to ensure that police officers demonstrate no prejudice or bias towards hunt monitors and other law-abiding members of the public.

The Chair moved that the questions be referred to the PCC. This was seconded by Councillor Poole and agreed unanimously by the Panel.

In response to the question presented by Dr Taylor, the Commissioner emphasised that his role did not encompass operational control of the police force. He advised that he had not been involved in decision-making for the issuing of the CPN on Warwickshire Hunt, or its subsequent withdrawal. He stated that the protocol between the Force and Warwickshire Hunt remained exempt from publication under Section 32 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. He acknowledged that the issue had prompted community concerns and stated that the Chief Constable had provided assurance that the Force would continue to respond to any incidents and monitor the effectiveness of the protocol. He underlined his expectation that the Force investigate any form of crime or anti-social behaviour with impartiality. He emphasised the importance of residents continuing to report any incidents of concern.

In response to the question presented by Ms Irwin, the PCC restated that he was not able to become involved in operational matters and could not comment on any specific incidents being dealt with by the Force. He advised that it was his duty to make a judgement on any appeals to complaints made to Warwickshire Police. For this reason, it was not appropriate for him to become involved in any investigations at an early stage. He reiterated his expectation that the Force investigate any form of crime or anti-social behaviour without prejudice or bias. It was a fundamental tenet that officers be led by evidence and apply the law equally and fairly. If it was felt that this principle had not been followed, formal channels could be used to seek a resolution.

In response, Dr Taylor emphasised that her question related to Warwickshire Hunt's activities since the withdrawal of the CPN. It was not a reiteration of the question she had presented at the Panel's meeting on 21 September 2023. She emphasised that her question also sought details of what action had been taken in response to complaints made to Warwickshire Police; it related to 'holding to account' of the Force by the PCC.

The Commissioner agreed that his role was to hold the Force to account. However, it was not to direct the Force in operational matters. He advised that the subject had been raised during meetings with the Force and that he was satisfied with the responses provided by the Chief Constable.

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 September 2023. He reported that Home Office funding of approximately £1m had been secured to support the objectives of the Serious Violence Prevention Strategy. He advised that a Partnership Delivery Group had been established to address Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). Discussions were also ongoing with neighbouring police forces and the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) to combat SOC.

In respect of police officer numbers, the Commissioner advised that the latest figures showed that the Force now had 1,127 officers. This would lead to better visibility of policing. He advised that

recruitment for the Police Constable Entry Programme (PCEP) would begin in June 2024. This two-year course provided an additional entry route into policing and had attracted a good level of interest.

The Commissioner provided an update on the 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) initiative, stating that it would provide a means to work more closely with mental health professionals to ensure that mental health calls for service could be treated by appropriately qualified individuals. There would be a phased introduction with the intention of RCRP being fully in place by the end of 2024. The progress of the initiative would be monitored closely.

The Commissioner advised that funding of £1m had been secured from Round 5 of the Safer Streets Fund. This money had been allocated to borough and district councils to support community safety initiatives across Warwickshire.

The Commissioner advised that work was underway in partnership with the Probation Service to progress the Community Payback scheme. This initiative provided an option to allocate community work to offenders as part of an out of court settlement. Attention would be given to identifying locations which had been subject to repeated anti-social behaviour which would benefit from being cleaned up. He requested that councillors contact him if they had suggestions for areas in need of attention.

In response to Andrew Davies, the Commissioner advised that the Local Criminal Justice Board, which he chaired, provided a forum for the relevant agencies to review criminal justice outcomes and performance. A focus on criminal justice matters was supported by a specialist policy officer within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) as well as data supplied by the Force's Criminal Justice Department. He stated that the most significant concern was the ongoing backlog in the Crown Courts. Recently, two additional Crown Courts had been opened in Warwickshire which would help to reduce the backlog. However, there was a national shortage of judges as well as a declining number of criminal barristers. The Government had acknowledged these difficulties, and criminal justice agencies were working in partnership to seek an improvement. He recognised the impact that delays had on victims of crime. The introduction of a national reporting mechanism (which required all police forces to record criminal justice statistics) would make it possible to compare performance across force areas.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) advised that the Panel's Planning and Performance Working Group could be provided with details of criminal justice outcomes and relative performance in Warwickshire. She advised that monitoring was undertaken by the OPCC, making use of the Ministry of Justice Dashboard as well as information supplied by the Police and Crown Prosecution Service. Data was collated and analysed by the Local Criminal Justice Board's Data and Performance Sub-Group. It would be utilised to develop a localised Criminal Justice Dashboard to monitor performance. She reported that Warwickshire Police had recently adopted an out of court resolution framework which would help to relieve pressure on the courts.

In response to Councillor Sinnott, the Commissioner advised that overall, Warwickshire Police employed approximately 2000 people. This encompassed 1,127 officers, approximately 70 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), and just under 800 members of staff. He stated that police staff formed a vital part of the organisation. He highlighted the complexity of the work undertaken by Control Centre staff which required communication skills and detailed knowledge of policing. Other teams, such as Finance and Human Resources, were also vital to the running of the Force.

He reported that the Force had experienced similar recruitment difficulties as other public organisations in recent years. However, good progress had been made and staff numbers were now close to establishment levels. He praised the contribution made by staff to respond to the challenges brought about by termination of the Strategic Alliance with West Mercia Police and the transformation of the Force that followed.

The Chair highlighted data that had recently been published showing the number of police officers proportionate to population across force areas. The data showed that, although the headcount of police officers had increased since the introduction of the Police Uplift Programme, the number of officers per person in the UK remained below 2017 levels. He asked the Commissioner if there was an aspiration to continue to expand the Force to achieve better proportionality with population growth.

The Commissioner stated that there was a need for the Force to grow proportionately to any increase in population. However, much depended on funding. Warwickshire was disadvantaged by the National Policing Funding Formula, meaning that significantly less money was received per head of population compared with more urbanised areas. It was hoped that the Government would revise the Funding Formula to make it fairer. This was widely supported by PCCs nationally.

The Chair highlighted the recently published Policing Productivity Review which had made a series of recommendations to improve efficiency in policing. He requested that the Commissioner provide periodic updates at future meetings to advise how he proposed to progress these recommendations alongside details of the response of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to the findings of the Review. The Review had examined how recent investment in police services could be monitored to gauge its effectiveness. The Chair stated that it would be informative to contrast the effect of recent investment in Warwickshire Police against the findings for other police forces.

The Commissioner stated that efficiency and productivity were key areas of focus and frequently raised with the Chief Constable. There had been substantial capital investment in the new ICT system. This would be monitored to measure productivity gains. He advised that the Force was currently undertaking a Review of the Empower Programme to gauge its effectiveness across the three strands of 'People', 'Place' and 'Technology'. He would update the Panel of the findings of the Review.

In response to Councillor Sinnott, the Commissioner advised that the 'Right Care, Right Person' (RCRP) scheme had been adopted by Humberside Police, showing good results. He emphasised the importance of learning from other forces' experience before implementing the scheme in Warwickshire.

The DCCP advised that care would be taken to ensure that the Integrated Care Board and NHS were positioned to respond to mental-health related calls for service prior to full implementation of RCRP. There would be no risk of vulnerable people being left unsupported. She highlighted the benefits of RCRP to ensure that resources were used as effectively as possible to provide specialist support to vulnerable individuals and enable the Force to focus on fighting crime.

In response to Councillor Golby, the DPCC advised that the Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership had given attention to the effect of homelessness and substance misuse on prison leavers which could lead to a cycle of criminality. Efforts would be made to work with housing

partners. She would also liaise with Councillor Golby who was well-placed to offer advice as Portfolio Holder for Housing and Communities at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council.

Councillor Fradgley highlighted the proposed introduction of an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Dashboard to develop a clearer understanding of ASB through data analysis. She highlighted the concerns expressed within communities most severely affected by drug activity, stating that some residents did not feel that their concerns were treated with seriousness by Warwickshire Police. She asked the PCC how measures to address ASB (including updated arrangements for Safer Neighbourhood Teams) would be monitored and reported back to the Panel.

The Commissioner stated that drug dealing occurred as an outcome of demand. It was often perpetrated by organised crime gangs which would operate wherever there was a market. A partnership response was required which included borough and district councils as well as housing associations. The Drug and Alcohol Strategic Partnership provided a forum to develop partnership arrangements. He reported that a drug and alcohol service provider had recently been recommissioned which would provide support to victims and undertake prevention work. He advised that he regularly engaged with the Chief Inspector at South Warwickshire looking specifically at drug-related problems in Stratford-upon-Avon. Progress had been made to disrupt county lines; however, tackling organised crime was an ongoing challenge. In the longer term, it would be necessary to focus on reducing demand for hard drugs.

The Chair highlighted that consideration of the PCC's proposed precept and budget for 2024/25 was scheduled at the next meeting. He highlighted the Panel's comments following approval of the precept for 2023/24 which included a request for the Panel to be briefed during the lead-up to budget setting with details of financial forecasting for the year ahead.

The Commissioner expressed his disappointment that the Panel had not formed a Budget Working Group in 2023/24. The Group had previously provided an opportunity to discuss budget monitoring processes. He emphasised the complexity of the budget setting process. He had received a submission from the Force identifying objectives for the year ahead alongside associated costs. This was being reviewed. He advised that the amount of the central government grant had not yet been confirmed. Furthermore, it was not yet known if a cap would be in place for the policing precept. He advised that confirmation of these details was required prior to developing a proposed budget for 2024/25. The draft Police Settlement was expected to be received by late December 2023. Once received, a draft Budget would be produced. He asked that borough and district councillors contact their finance teams to request that they share details of council tax base figures in good time to allow a calculation to be made of projected precept income.

The Chair stated that the Panel was in the process of reviewing its working group arrangements; attention would be given to how budget monitoring could be accommodated within the revised arrangement.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) stated that the OPCC would be able to provide a briefing note for the Panel including key information during the lead-in to budget setting. She requested that members make use of their community networks to promote the Budget Consultation Survey which was now live on the PCC website.

The Commissioner stated that an informal briefing would be provided to the Panel ahead of the formal precept meeting. However, for this to be meaningful, it would need to be held in January 2024 once details of the policing settlement had been confirmed.

The Chair stated that this would be helpful. He accepted that budget setting was subject to inherent time constraints. He suggested a phased approach to briefing the Panel – this would support a more complete understanding of the relevant issues ahead of formal consideration of the proposed precept.

Councillor Poole advised that he had offered his support to liaise between the Panel and OPCC to enable consideration of the draft budget.

3. Community Safety Partnerships

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced the report which provided an overview of arrangements for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). A meeting had been scheduled with CSP chairs on 1 December 2023 to examine future arrangements in detail.

Councillor Poole highlighted the funding amounts awarded by the PCC between 2017/18 and 2023/24 to each of the CSPs (on page 48 of the agenda pack). There were disparities between the amounts provided to each CSP – for example, Rugby CSP had received £160,618 whereas Nuneaton and Bedworth CSP had received £499,793. He queried why this had been the case.

Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that funding allocations to CSPs had been determined in various ways. More recently, a bidding process had been adopted whereby CSPs were encouraged to bid for funding for specific projects. A revised arrangement was under consideration which would allocate funding more equitably. She highlighted that PCC grant funding to CSPs was supplemented by national funding (such as from the Safer Streets Fund).

The Commissioner highlighted the complexities of determining funding allocations which required consideration of multiple factors to arrive at a balanced evaluation. It was regularly reviewed.

In response to Councillor Brown, the Commissioner advised that applications for grant funding were assessed against the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan. Detailed evaluation was required to ensure that money was allocated fairly and to areas where the need was most urgent.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC) stated that policy officers within the OPCC were willing to provide support and guidance to council officers when preparing applications for funding.

Councillor Golby stated that the Communities Team at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) was proactive and able to identify areas where funding was most needed. Additional funding had been received in recognition of the need for investment within the Borough as well as because of proactive work by the Communities Team.

Councillor Brown stated that it had been helpful to review how funding allocations were determined. She suggested that guidance from the OPCC and sharing of best practice between CSPs would help to ensure parity across applications for funding from each borough and district, improving the likelihood of funding being awarded more evenly.

Polly Reed advised that a focus on these areas was proposed at the upcoming meeting of CSP chairs. The meeting would also examine the types and level of crime data provided by Warwickshire Police to CSPs.

4. Issues Raised by Community Safety Partnerships

Councillor Poole reported that two reviews had recently been undertaken by Rugby CSP leading to updated Terms of Reference being produced. These would be agreed at the next CSP meeting with input from the Commissioner or his representative.

5. Report of the Planning and Performance Working Group

The Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Barbara Brown, provided an update to the Panel of the Group's recent meeting on 17 November 2023.

Councillor Brown reported that:

- Consideration had been given to the Performance Scrutiny Report prepared for the Governance and Performance Board (GPB) meeting due to be held between the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable on 5 December 2023.
- The Group learned that performance data was now more readily available following ICT upgrades by the Force. This would provide a valuable tool for scrutiny.
- The Group also received a report examining Environmental Sustainability including details of the Commissioner and Chief Constable's areas of focus to reduce emissions, establish an organisational awareness of sustainability goals, reduce waste, and ensure that procurement decisions take account of environmental objectives. She emphasised the complexity of work in these areas. For example, attention had been given to the suitability of electric vehicles for policing where difficulties could be experienced due to EV range and performance.
- The Group was encouraged to hear that the OPCC was seeking to appoint a Strategic Estate and Asset Manager to develop an Estates Strategy that would be aligned with environmental objectives.
- The Group expressed its view that a developed plan was required which tracked and measured performance. It would be important to measure carbon savings and to ensure that decision making was guided by an informed understanding of which interventions would have the greatest impact. It was recognised by the Group that this was a long-term undertaking.
- The Group would focus on Cyber Crime at its next meeting in March 2024.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, Polly Reed (Chief Executive, OPCC) advised that environmental sustainability work was ongoing across the organisation prior to development of a formal plan. The role of the Strategic Estate and Asset Manager, once recruited, would encompass drawing these activities together into a unified plan.

The Commissioner agreed that a strategic plan was required. He highlighted that good progress had been made to install solar panels, EV charging facilities, new boilers, and double glazing across the police estate.

Andrew Davies highlighted that long-term investment would be required to address climate change. There was a need for business cases to reflect this and for any monitoring of the budget to take account of the timescales for investment.

It was resolved that the Environmental Sustainability Strategic Plan be added to the Panel's Work Programme for an update to be provided once development of the Plan was underway. This would allow a focus on how long-term progress could be measured to reduce carbon impacts.

6. Work Programme

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy would be added to the Work Programme. The OPCC would be consulted to determine an appropriate meeting date to review the Strategic Plan in 2024.

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 11.42.


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Chair

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