

Minutes of the meeting of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel held on 20 June 2019

Present:

Members of the Panel

Councillors:

Nicola Davies	Warwickshire County Council
Ian Davison	Warwick District Council
Jenny Fradgley	Warwickshire County Council
Pete Gilbert	Warwickshire County Council
Andy Jenns	Warwickshire County Council
Dave Parsons	Warwickshire County Council
Derek Poole	Rugby Borough Council
David Reilly	North Warwickshire Borough Council
Sarah Whalley-Hoggins	Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Independent Members

Andy Davis
Bob Malloy

Also Present

Other Councillors

Neil Dirveiks Warwickshire County Council

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)

Sara Ansell	Head of Finance
Elizabeth Hall	Treasurer
Neil Hewison	Chief Executive
David Patterson	Development and Policy lead (Performance and Scrutiny)
Philip Seccombe	Police and Crime Commissioner
Neil Tipton	Head of Media and Communications

Warwickshire County Council Officers

Tom McColgan	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Jane Pollard	Legal Services Manager
Virginia Rennie	Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

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

Bob Malloy nominated Councillor Dave Reilly to serve as Chair to the Panel for the coming year. Councillor Poole seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations and Councillor Reilly was elected unanimously as Chair to the Police and Crime Panel for 2019/20.

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

Councillor Davies nominated Councillor Derek Poole to serve as Vice Chair to the Panel for the coming year. Councillor Gilbert seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations and Councillor Poole was elected unanimously as Vice Chair to the Police and Crime Panel for 2019/20.

3. General

1) Apologies

Councillor O'Rourke sent her apologies and Councillor Parsons was in attendance as a substitute. Councillor Wright sent his apologies and Councillor Jenns was in attendance as a substitute. Councillor Watkins sent his apologies.

2) Members' Disclosures of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests

There were none.

3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed the new members to the panel; Councillors Chris Watkins, Ian Davison, Sarah Whalley-Hoggins, Pete Gilbert, Jenny Fradgely, Maggie O'Rourke and Andy Wright. The Chair also gave thanks to the outgoing members; Councillors Mike Brain, Richard Chattaway, Neil Dirveiks, June Tandy, Adrian Warwick, Andrew Thompson and Tony Jefferson.

On behalf of the Panel, the Chair thanked Councillor Davies for her hard work as Chair of the Panel over the previous two municipal years.

4) Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2019

It was noted that there was an error on page three of the minutes.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Public Question Time

There was no public involvement.

5. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner congratulated the Chair on his appointment and introduced himself to the new panel members.

The Police and Crime Commissioner introduced the report which provided an update on the work undertaken by the Commissioner and his office since the last meeting.

In response to Councillor Poole, the Commissioner stated that new officers were trained in force; first at Leek Wootton for 17 weeks and then shadowing an experienced officer.

In response to Councillor Parsons, the Commissioner stated that by the time an individual began training as an officer they had already gone through a significant vetting and selection process over a course of several months and as a result there was a very low dropout rate for trainees.

Councillor Davison asked if the Commissioner felt that the data provided by the Force in the performance report provided the information he needed to effectively scrutinise the Chief Constable. Councillor Davison noted that the report offered a wide variety of reporting sometimes comparing Warwickshire to similar forces, sometimes to regional neighbours and sometimes to national figures and some metrics were reported annually while others were reported on a monthly basis.

The Commissioner responded that he received both monthly and quarterly performance reports from the Force and the Commissioner stated that he felt it was important to have quantitative evidence to assess police performance by. The Commissioner stated that the nature of Warwickshire Police as a small force meant that it was generally dealing with small figures which without context would give a misleading picture of crime in the county as very small changes could appear significant for example an increase of 1 offence to 2 being reported as doubling of crime. The Commissioner also stated that national and regional statistics helped provide a heads up about what may be coming Warwickshire's way as a lot of criminality in the County was driven by individuals coming out of neighbouring urban areas this was especially true of organised crime.

Councillor Davison asked what the Commissioner felt good police performance looked like; whether the Commissioner was just looking in terms of recorded crimes or at other factors like victim satisfaction or outcomes.

The Commissioner responded that he did not feel it was a simple as tick box system for crime going up or down and that he wanted to understand the challenges facing the force and how they were responding to it. The Commissioner emphasised the dual nature of his role to challenge the Chief Constable and the Force but also to support them which had been particularly important through the termination of the alliance.

In response to Councillor Davison, the Commissioner stated that the Force was in the process of establishing an Assurance, Scrutiny and Improvement group which would give an opportunity to look at what information was being provided in the performance report. The Commissioner also stated that national figures were dominated by the large urban forces and figures taken from the most similar forces group were a more suitable guide for assessing how well Warwickshire Police were performing. Neil Hewison added that there were a number of former police officers in the Commissioner's office with an in-depth understanding of police performance figures.

In response to Councillor Whalley-Hoggins, the Commissioner stated that since October 2018 around 30 transferees from other forces had joined the force and the Chief Constable had recently appointed seven new superintendents of which three were joining Warwickshire Police from other forces. The Commissioner stated that it was important to bring experienced officers in from outside the force not only to help share knowledge and best practice but to provide a replacement to the handful of officers who leave Warwickshire on average every month.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, the Commissioner stated that he agreed it was important for the Force to reflect the diversity of the population it policed. The Commissioner reported that around 5% of police officers were from BAME backgrounds which was less than the 7% figure for Warwickshire's population. The rate of police staff and PCSOs from minority ethnic backgrounds was higher at over 10%. The Commissioner stated that the Force had made an effort to reach out to minority ethnic groups in Warwickshire during the recent round of recruitment.

Councillor Gilbert stated that he felt that crime levels in his community had not substantially changed over the 30 years he had lived there but what had changed was the visibility of community policing falling while the visibility of crimes through press coverage and community forums had risen. Councillor Gilbert sought assurance from the Commissioner that there would be an increase in community policing following the new officers joining Warwickshire Police.

The Commissioner responded that he felt that Councillor Gilbert was broadly right that crime rates had not substantially increased but that more people were willing to report crime. The Commissioner stated that it was vital that residents felt able to report crimes because if crimes were not being reported the Police would not be able to take effective action to prevent them. The Commissioner also stated that he was keen to increase the visibility of Police Officers and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and that all of the new officers would start their careers in response responding to 999 calls.

Councillor Davies noted that the graph in the performance report showed that victim satisfaction had fallen by around 10% over the last 10 years and she hoped that satisfaction rates would start to rise again rather than remaining where it was.

David Patterson responded that the Force had brought in a consultant to look at victim satisfaction who had made recommendations around providing reassurance at the point of contact. The work to implement new procedures around contact with victims had been disrupted by the end of the alliance as it had been a joint project but there would be an opportunity to reinvigorate this in the newly restructured Warwickshire Police. The Commissioner had also been holding the Force to account about ensuring that there was adequate follow up with victims which was closely linked to victim satisfaction. David Patterson also stated that he expected to see victim satisfaction increase with the introduction of a newly commissioned integrated victim management service.

Councillor Davies noted the positive comments in the report around the opportunity to reform Warwickshire Police in the wake of the end of the strategic alliance with West Mercia and asked the Commissioner to provide assurances about the financial resilience of the Force over the coming 12 months.

The Commissioner responded that there had been challenges around the budget for as long as he had been Commissioner but the 12% increase in the policing precept was now in the base budget and the additional revenue that brought would provide stability. The Commissioner stated that the Police like all public sector bodies had to set a balanced budget which he anticipated the Force would be able to achieve and could not foresee the need for any cost saving exercises.

6. Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2018-19

The Commissioner introduced his annual report.

Bob Malloy noted that it was reported that there had been a small reduction in crime overall. While this was true for calendar year 2018 for the financial year 2018/19 there had in fact been a small increase in crime which was reported in the performance report under the previous item.

Neil Hewison responded that Bob Malloy was correct that the annual report was for the financial year 2018/19 and should reference the figures for the financial year and not the calendar year.

Bob Malloy stated that the quarter four performance report showed a 15% increase in individuals being found in possession of an offensive weapon which seemed to run counter to the narrative of the annual report which noted that Warwickshire had not seen the increase in knife crime that had affected other parts of the country.

Neil Hewison stated that the rise of knife related crime in the county had been relatively small compared to the national picture and Warwickshire Police did not anticipate experiencing the level of knife crime seen elsewhere in the country.

Councillor Parsons noted that there had been an increased deployment of officers in Stratford and Alcester which had successfully decreased response times and asked if a similar uplift in deployment could be expected in the north of the County.

The Commissioner stated that he had been to a number of Parish Councils in the North Warwickshire area and was aware of the concerns about response times. The Commissioner stressed that it was not his decision to take about where officers were based but that he would like to see a patrol response team based in Coleshill which would be the only patrol response in North Warwickshire. The Commissioner stated that a feasibility study was currently being undertaken in the force and the Chief Constable would take a decision after seeing the outcome of that report. The Commissioner also stated that the Force was also investigating the possibility of basing more officers in Atherstone.

Andy Davis stated that he appreciated the positive tone of the report but felt that the challenge presented by the termination of the alliance had perhaps been downplayed. Andy Davis stated that residents who appreciate a realistic view of the challenges ahead.

The Commissioner responded that he felt Warwickshire Police needed to be optimistic in its messaging about the termination of the alliance to reassure the public. While the Commission did acknowledge the challenges and had spoken about them before to the Panel he did believe that the end of the alliance was an opportunity for Warwickshire Police to improve the service it provided to residents.

Andy Davis welcomed the inclusion in the discussion of police funding about the work the Commissioner had undertaken around putting the case to central government for increased police funding and asked the Commissioner to give the Panel some more detail about his involvement with central government.

The Commissioner responded that he had had contact with the Home Secretary and the Policing Minister was due to visit Warwickshire in the coming weeks. The Commissioner met with Warwickshire's MPs including Jeremy Wright MP who was a cabinet minister and had lobbied the treasury and home officer on behalf of police funding. The Commissioner also worked closely with the National Police Chiefs Council which had their own lobbying operation and the national lead for police funding was the chief constable for the West Midlands with whom Warwickshire often worked closely with.

Councillor Gilbert asked the Commissioner if he could provide some further information on the level of hate crime in Nuneaton and Bedworth which was shown in the report to be increasing year on year.

The Commissioner stated that hate crime was taken seriously by Warwickshire Police and victims would always be treated with respect. The Commissioner stated that he felt victims felt more confident in reporting hate crime to the Police and this had contributed to the rise in hate crime numbers. David Patterson stated that he would be happy to discuss the hate crime statistics in more detail with Councillor Gilbert outside of the meeting.

Councillor Gilbert asked if victim satisfaction was a reflection of how victims felt the police had treated them and investigated their case or whether it was tied to the outcome and thus actually measuring the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service and the Courts Service as well as Warwickshire Police.

David Patterson responded that most feedback from victims was collected around 12 weeks after they were reported so the outcome of the investigation and any subsequent prosecution was not normally known. David Patterson also stated that there was work to be done on victim satisfaction both on improving how feedback was gathered and the questions which were asked as well as on the Force's interaction with victims.

In response to Councillor Gilbert, the Commissioner confirmed that he sat on the Local Criminal Justice Board which brought together partners from across the criminal justice system including the courts and Crown Prosecution Service. Through the board he was able to discuss issues about outcomes and performance.

The Chair noted that there was an update on the victims service which had been commissioned by the Commissioner and that it would be good when considering the Victims Service to also consider victim satisfaction and the work the Commissioner's Officer and the Force would be undertaking to improve it.

Councillor Whalley-Hoggins asked if the Commissioner could provide any more information about safeguarding in the report given the alarming statistics included as part of the performance report provided under a previous item which reported 'exceptional volumes' of child sexual exploitation in the north of the county.

The Commissioner stated that he agreed that safeguarding was an extremely important function of Warwickshire police. The annual report tried to synthesise a number of other reports which contained the detail and showed the direction of travel. Neil Hewison added that the report was a report of the Police and Crime Commissioner rather than a report about the police. The report did contain information about initiatives the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner had led on or funded around safeguarding.

7. Annual Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Councillor Davies introduced the annual report of the Police and Crime Panel which provided an outline of the Panel's work over the last 12 months before looking ahead to the challenges of the coming year including scrutinising the termination of the alliance and reformation of an independent Warwickshire Police, the third police and crime commissioner elections in May 2020, and the continuing review of the Commissioner's approach to substance misuse by the Planning and Performance working group.

8. Report of the Planning and Performance Working Group

Bob Malloy introduced the report which covered the Group's discussion of Police Performance as well as its continued proactive scrutiny review of the Commissioner's approach to substance misuse. Bob Malloy thanked Neil Hewison and David Patterson for the open manner in which they presented reports to the group which enabled constructive discussions at meetings.

Panel members agreed that Councillor Neil Dirveiks continue as a co-opted member for the Working Group's review of substance misuse.

In response to the Chair, Bob Malloy confirmed that the Group's report on substance misuse would be a publicly available report and could be circulated to any interested parties including the community safety partnerships.

Resolved

That the Panel notes the draft minutes of the Planning and Performance Working Group meeting held on 13 May 2019.

9. Work Programme

The Chair noted the three items on the work programme for September; strategic alliance exit update, Police and Crime Plan 2016-2021 revision and Victim Services update. The Chair stated that he felt that discussions around the end of the alliance were so significant that they warranted turning the whole of the September meeting over to them and moving the Victim Services update to the November meeting.

Andy Davis suggested the Panel consider a report on how the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is preparing for the elections in May 2020 in November 2019.

The Commissioner stated that the legislation to move complaint appeals from independent panels to police and crime commissioners was likely to be delayed until 2020. The Commissioner stated that he was investigating a regional arrangement for dealing with complaints.

Resolved: The amended work programme was noted.

10. Any Urgent Items

None

11. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

The Chair moved that, in light of the remaining items on the agenda, that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for item 12 on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Section 12(a) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Resolved

That the Police and Crime Panel meeting moves into private session.

12. Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 March 2019

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13. Complaints

The Panel was provided with an update.

The meeting rose at 12:20 pm

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Chair