

Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel

Monday, 16 March 2020

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members

Councillor David Reilly (Chair) (North Warwickshire Borough Council)
Councillor Nicola Davies (Warwickshire County Council)
Andy Davis (Independent Member)
Councillor Ian Davison (Warwick District Council)
Bob Malloy (Independent Member)
Councillor Derek Poole (Vice Chair) (Rugby Borough Council)
Councillor Sarah Whalley-Hoggins (Stratford-on-Avon District Council)
Councillor Andrew Wright (Warwickshire County Council)

Office of the Police and Crime Panel (OPCC)

Sara Ansell, Chief Finance Officer
Neil Hewison, Chief Executive
Chris Lewis, Development and Policy Lead (Victims and Road Safety)
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

John Cole, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Jane Pollard, Legal Services Manager
Virginia Rennie, Strategy and Commissioning Manager (Strategic Finance)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Jenny Fradgley (Warwickshire County Council), Peter Gilbert (Warwickshire County Council), Maggie O'Rourke (Warwickshire County Council) and Christopher Watkins (Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council).

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were none.

(3) Minutes of the previous meeting

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

(4) Public Speaking

There was none.

2. Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Police and Crime Commissioner introduced the report. He stated that since the report had been produced, the progression of the COVID-19 virus had triggered postponement of the UK local elections, including the ballot for Police and Crime Commissioners, which were due to be held on 7 May 2020. He advised that the elections were likely to be rescheduled for May 2021 and that it was anticipated that the terms of Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales would be extended by 12 months.

The Police and Crime Commissioner stated that the existing Police and Crime Plan covered the period up to 2021 which provided scope for the anticipated additional 12 months in office and mitigated the necessity of urgently producing an updated plan. He observed that the scheduled pre-election purdah period would also be deferred to 2021.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that a plan to address the implications of COVID-19 had been instigated by Public Health at Warwickshire County Council (WCC). He stated that, to date, there had been seven reported cases of the virus in Warwickshire resulting in two fatalities. The Commissioner added that he would monitor the response of Warwickshire Police to the pandemic and hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that the Force acted effectively.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised that contingency measures to improve resilience had been enacted within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) and Police Force. He drew attention to the threat posed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus but stated that, at present, both organisations were operating at full strength.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that, following the termination of the Strategic Alliance with West Mercia Police, progress had been made to determine the quantum of the financial settlement. The Commissioner stated that the 2020/21 Budget had been predicated upon the assumption of no settlement with West Mercia Police and that recent progress had contributed to a clearer outlook for reserve strategy planning.

In respect of the transition of services following termination of the Alliance, the Police and Crime Commissioner reported that in October 2019, 18 services had transferred to the independent Warwickshire Police Force. He advised that a further 17 services would come under independent control by the end of March 2020. The remaining four services (ICT, Forensics, Transactional Services and File Storage) would be subject to a Section 22 Agreement with West Mercia Police to enable continued joint service provision for a period of 12 months or longer, if necessary.

In the longer-term, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that ICT provision would be operated in partnership with West Midlands Police, primarily in the area of data storage.

Transactional Services, including Payroll, would also form part of a collaborative agreement with West Midlands Police, alongside provision of Forensic Services and dog kennelling. The Commissioner reported that West Midlands Police was highly regarded and that the partnership arrangement offered good value for efficient services.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that approximately 1004 officers were currently employed by the Force and expressed confidence in the stability of officer provision in the County. He advised that guidance was anticipated in respect of the governmental pledge to recruit 20,000 new police officers nationwide. He stated that, at present, a total number of 1100 to 1200 officers was a realistic aspiration for the Force dependent upon other factors.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that the introduction of a monthly 'Performance Accountability Meeting' (PAM) with the Chief Constable had proved to be beneficial. He advised that formal minutes were produced for these meetings and highlighted the improved openness and transparency afforded by this arrangement.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that resources to address rural crime in the County would be doubled during the forthcoming financial year as outlined in his precept increase proposal.

The Police and Crime Commissioner underlined his commitment to providing support for the victims of crime. He advised that the process of allocating grant funding to organisations that provided victim support was underway. This was a competitive process and the Commissioner stated that he would seek to prioritise continuity whilst evaluating the individual merits of applications.

In respect of the Road Safety Fund, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that several promising applications for funding had been received. He stated that some co-commissioning with the Warwickshire County Council Road Safety Partnership was under consideration.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that, under the provisions of the Basic Statutory model of the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020, responsibility for the resolution of appeals would rest in his control. This had previously been undertaken by the Chief Constable. He advised that, given the relatively low number of appeals in the County, a collaborative approach with other police forces for administration of the appeal process had been coordinated as a cost-effective solution. The merits of this approach would be monitored on an on-going basis.

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that on 18 February 2020, he had voluntarily spent a night in custody at Leamington Spa Police Station to develop his awareness of the custody process and the conditions experienced by detainees. He commented that the exercise had been a worthwhile learning experience and had also raised money for charitable causes.

The Police and Crime Commissioner advised that the Public Priorities Survey was underway. He reported that this was a joint enterprise with Warwickshire Police arising from a recommendation from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The survey would seek an opinion from a representative sample of the community in respect of priorities for policing, criminal justice matters and preferred areas for attention from the Police. The initial phase was conducted by means of a telephone survey which reached out to 750 people within the County (comprising 150 people from

each Borough and District). The Commissioner stated that a professional survey and marketing company had been commissioned to conduct the survey and analyse the findings. The second phase, conducted on-line, was in progress. The Commissioner expressed his interest in the outcome of the survey and indicated that he would report back to the Panel once the results had been collated.

The Police and Crime Commissioner directed the Panel to his report which included a list of events and forums he had attended since his last report, as well as a list of formal decisions reached during this timeframe.

In response to Bob Malloy, the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that detailed planning work by the Force in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus was underway and that he would be taking a close interest. He advised that home working was likely to be a viable option for support staff within the organisation, for example Policy Officers, and that of the approximate 2000 people employed by Warwickshire Police, 700 to 800 occupied staff roles. The Commissioner stated that there was an obvious need for police officers to be present at briefings and attend incidents across the County. He added that the Chief Constable would be planning for the likelihood of officers being affected by the virus, but that it was his expectation that all incidents would be responded to with a 'business as usual' stance adopted by the Force if possible.

In response to Councillor Whalley-Hoggins, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that an emergency fund of £5million had been set aside which could be accessed in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. He added that the anticipated settlement with West Mercia would provide additional funds which could improve the financial outlook. He advised that Warwickshire Police would be working in partnership with Public Health England, WCC, the District and Borough Councils, and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service as part of the Local Resilience Forum. Sara Ansell (Chief Finance Officer) added that, in the event of an emergency, an application for a special grant could be made; in this eventuality the Force would need to fund the first one percent of the net budget requirement which would be a viable proposition.

Councillor Whalley-Hoggins highlighted the potential challenges associated with social distancing and self-isolation. She drew attention to statistics which indicated a rise in instances of domestic violence during Christmas holidays when households were isolated from the wider community for a prolonged period. The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that this was an area of concern that he would raise with the Chief Constable. He reiterated that it was forecast that the Force would continue to attend all incidents including reports of domestic abuse.

In response to Councillor Davison, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that measures to limit the likelihood of transmission of the COVID-19 virus would be enacted by Warwickshire Police. He commented that splitting teams was a recognised means of approaching this issue, including implementation of procedures to prevent senior officers being present in the same room. He recognised that this would be challenging in some instances, as police officers would continue to attend briefings and make use of police cars. However, he indicated that he would scrutinise the Chief Constable's proposals closely in respect of resilience planning and modularisation.

Councillor Davison observed that published figures showed a decline in levels of public confidence and trust in policing. He suggested that, in response to the outbreak of COVID-19, it was possible that the Police would need to call upon Warwickshire residents to adopt some extreme changes in lifestyle and behaviour. He asked the Police and Crime Commissioner if diminished levels of trust

could act as an obstacle to this process and whether measures could be enacted to improve the outlook for public engagement in the coming weeks and months.

The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that there was an awareness of the challenges ahead within the organisation. He added that Warwickshire Police would be working closely with partner agencies including the Local Resilience Forum to identify a proportionate response to the stresses emerging from the outbreak of the virus.

In response to Andy Davis, the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that the existing Police and Crime Plan would remain in operation until 2021 and that the next plan would be produced by the successful candidate in the May 2021 election. Neil Hewison (Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) commented that a team away day had been scheduled prior to deferment of the election to consider arrangements for the next Police and Crime Plan. He added that the postponed election would mean that the successful candidate would have a restricted timescale to prepare the next plan and so the OPCC would take action to improve the likelihood of a positive outcome; the Public Priorities Survey would contribute to this process.

Councillor Poole congratulated the Police and Crime Commissioner on his progress in strengthening the Rural Crime Team. He commented that farmers and rural residents would feel more secure as an outcome. The Commissioner stated that he had engaged with the National Farmers' Union (NFU) when preparing his plans and indicated that the augmented Rural Crime Team would seek to address issues affecting the wider rural community such as fly-tipping and Post Office break-ins alongside recognised problems affecting farmers such as sheep slaughtering.

The Chair noted that the Public Priorities Survey was due to close on 20 March 2020 which constituted a relatively brief timeframe for responses to be received. He observed that the Panel had considered the consultation for the proposed precept increase to be limited in its duration.

Neil Tipton (Head of Media and Communications, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) stated that the anticipated pre-election purdah period had impacted upon scheduling arrangements for the survey. In view of the rescheduling of the election, he advised that it could be possible to make some adjustments. In response to the Chair, Neil Tipton reported that the survey had been widely publicised, advertised on social media and prominently displayed on the website of the OPCC.

3. Home Office Police and Crime Panel Grant

The Chair reported that a grant was provided by the Home Office to Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to offset the costs associated with the operation and administration of the Police and Crime Panel in its capacity as Host Authority. He observed that the grant claim process had not been recently scrutinised by the Panel and recommended that the subject be considered by the Budget Working Group. The recommendation was endorsed by the Panel.

Resolved:

That the Police and Crime Panel Budget Working Group scrutinise the Home Office grant claim process.

4. Recruitment of a New Independent Panel Member

The Chair introduced the item and praised the contribution of Bob Malloy, who had indicated his intention to stand down from his role as an Independent Member of the Panel at the conclusion of his term on 5 December 2020.

The Chair recommended that measures be enacted to recruit a replacement Independent Panel Member. Jane Pollard (Legal Services Manager) advised that she would circulate the job description and person specification to Members of the Panel for information, and to provide an opportunity for comments to be made. She recommended that the vacancy be advertised in September 2020 with a view to scheduling interviews in October and consideration of candidates by the Panel at the meeting on 19 November 2020.

The Chair proposed that formal consideration of the selection process be scheduled for the meeting of the Panel on 24 September 2020. He prompted Panel Members who were aware of any suitable individuals to nominate prospective candidates.

5. Membership of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels

The Chair reported that he had been elected to the Executive of National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels. He requested the support of the Panel for his occupancy of this role. The Members of the Panel unanimously offered their support.

6. Work Programme

In recognition of the unknown complexities and unique challenges presented by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, the Chair proposed that the Work Programme be suspended. He recommended that the status of the Work Programme be reassessed at the meeting of the Panel on 18 June 2020.

The Chair advised that the report of the Planning and Performance Group 'Review of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Funding of Substance Misuse Services' would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Planning and Performance Group prior to consideration by the Panel on 18 June 2020.

7. Dates of Meetings

The Chair invited the Panel to take note of the future meeting dates:

- Thursday 18 June 2020
- Thursday 24 September 2020
- Thursday 19 November 2020
- Monday 1 February 2021
- Thursday 1 April 2021

8. Any Urgent Items

There were none.

9. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Resolved: 'That members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972'.

10. Exempt Minutes

Resolved: That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11. Complaints

There were none.

The meeting rose at 11.20am

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Chair

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