

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Tuesday, 18 September 2018, - 1.30 pm

Minutes

Present:

Cllr S J Mackay (Chairman), Cllr T Baker, Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Gareth Prosser, Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Cllr Juliet Smith, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Dave Tremellen and Cllr Brian Wilcox

Also attended:

John Campion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
Tracey Onslow, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

Tim Rice (Senior Public Health Practitioner),
Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2018 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

262 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Kuldip Sahota had replaced Councillor Rajash Mehta (Telford and Wrekin Council) as a co-opted member.

263 Named Substitutes

None.

264 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Gerald Dakin, Roger Evans, Kuldip Sahota and Michael Wood. In addition, Mrs Carole Clive and Colonel Tony Ward Co-opted Independent Lay-members had also given apologies.

Declarations of interest were made as follows:

- Gareth Prosser was a retired Police Officer in

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> receipt of a West Mercia Police Pension • Steve Mackay was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police).
265	Chairman's Announcements	The Chairman reported that he had attended the Local Government Association (LGA) Police and Crime Panel Workshop in July, which had looked at Government priorities, Serious Violence Strategy, domestic abuse, fire governance, neighbouring panel meetings and the enhanced role of Police and Crime Commissioners in respect of complaints and multi-agency working. In addition, the Chairman had also met with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel in September.
266	Public Participation	None.
267	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 June 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
268	Report on the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy	<p>The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been asked to provide the Panel with an update on the Serious Violence Strategy in respect of West Mercia, including the proposed strategic response to the Strategy and the key actions and commitments.</p> <p>In his Report, the PCC was specifically asked to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent of the serious violence problem in West Mercia, including the analysis of problem profiles (eg knife crime) to give the Panel a clear picture of the current and predictive situation • The PCC's approach to governance and partnership co-ordination across West Mercia • Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF) • The PCC's commissioning plans reflecting the requirements of the Strategy • The effect on the Police and Crime Plan • Links with Public Health. <p>The PCC advised the Panel that the Serious Violence Strategy was launched by the Home Secretary in April 2018. The Strategy was intended to balance the need for prevention and early intervention with effective law enforcement. It focused on a partnership approach to</p>

tackling serious violence, with all agencies working together to address the challenges.

The Strategy included several proposals for PCC involvement and set out a new challenge for Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) and other local groups. The Strategy also set out new initiatives including the Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF) and the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre.

There five main areas of PCC involvement identified within the Strategy were:

- (i) Local Leadership Role – PCC's were asked to play a key leadership role, bringing local partners together to address serious violence
- (ii) New EIYF – £22m to support local partnership initiatives. This would be PCC driven through setting strategic direction and working with CSP's and other community groups
- (iii) Police & Crime Plans – inclusion of serious violence as a priority in Police and Crime Plans and setting out what action would be taken
- (iv) Strengthening Links with Health – further consideration to be given to widening the PCC role e.g. around drug treatment
- (v) Sharing information and best practice – with specific mention of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) project in South Wales and the multi-agency analytical hub in Avon & Somerset.

The PCC highlighted the following key areas:

- There were 10,161 violence with injury offences were recorded for West Mercia in 2017/18, a 2% reduction compared to the previous financial year. Current volumes of violent crime (Q1; Apr – Jul 2018) were below projected levels and were 3% below the same period in 2017/18.
- In relation to knife crime, 710 possession of weapons offences were recorded in West Mercia in 2017/18; an 8% increase compared to the previous year. The increase was driven by “other firearms offences”, such as offences related to illegal trade, supply and repair etc. There was no increase in possession of knives/bladed articles and firearms during this period. Data related to the use of knives/firearms was recorded separately.
- 81 gun crime offences were recorded in 2017/18;

an increase of 15 offences compared to the previous financial year. It was noted that volumes remained low in this area (0.064 offences per 1,000 residents).

- The Force produced a number of intelligence products related to serious violence. These included a knife crime problem profile, a County Lines problem profile and a County Lines presentation for partners. These products were routinely shared with the PCC. The PCC was confident and reassured that that he had a good strategic oversight of how the Force were identifying the risk and responding to it.
- Telford & Wrekin had been identified as the pilot area to embed the Serious Violence Strategy in West Mercia. The pilot was set to run for 12 months and the PCC would provide scrutiny of the pilot through his holding to account processes. Activity undertaken in Telford & Wrekin would be based on ongoing analysis of serious violence within the area including the link between serious violence, deprivation and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs). The PCC would report back to the Panel on the outcome of the Pilot.
- The PCC was linked in with partners nationally through the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Serious Violence Task & Finish Group. Existing partnership arrangements such as Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Groups (SOCJAG's) and CSP's would be useful vehicles for co-ordinating local partnership activity.
- SOCJAG's were in every county and brought partner agencies together with the aim of pursuing, preventing, protecting and preparing against serious organised crime (SOC). Partners (including the police) shared data and intelligence within this forum to inform multi-agency activity. A PCC representative attended every SOCJAG meeting and the PCC's Crime Reduction Board (CRB) provided overarching governance across the 4 SOCJAG's.
- A number of serious organised crime (SOC) partnership conferences had been arranged to further raise awareness and understanding of SOC across West Mercia. The first conference was held in Worcestershire in July 2018. Further conferences would be held in Shropshire/Telford and Herefordshire in September 2018. Each of the conferences would be opened by the DPCC/PCC.
- As part of the Serious Violence Strategy, the Home Office's Violence and Vulnerability Unit

(VVU) had offered 3 key areas of support and intervention to forces and PCCs. This included Locality Reviews, Strategic Framework Reviews and training packages. With support and funding from the PCC, West Mercia was one of few areas that had taken up all three offers.

- The PCC had also funded a Strategic Framework Review at a cost of £25,000 (including match funding from the Home Office) focusing on County Lines, gangs, violence and vulnerability across West Mercia.
- The PCC was also in the process of launching a number of initiatives to address vulnerability factors underlying serious violence:
 - A pilot targeting vulnerable missing children in Shropshire
 - Development of a long term strategy for Restorative Justice (RJ) to include children excluded from education
 - Development of a Drugs Strategy to tackle drug misuse and associated criminality including serious violence and County Lines, the Panel would be provided with an update on this in due course.
- The DPCC was on the APCC Serious Violence Task & Finish group. This group fed into the national Serious Violence Task Force, Ministerial meetings and facilitated wider discussions with Home Office officials. In order to be successful in a bid for EIYF, PCC's needed to evidence either a rise in serious violence or persistently high levels of serious violence. As West Mercia had not had an increase in serious violence and volumes of gun/knife crime remained relatively low, a decision was made to put in a bid as a region (comprising Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands). West Mercia was leading on the development of the bid in conjunction with CSPs, on behalf of all four PCC's.
- Existing diversionary initiatives within West Mercia had supported over 2,000 young people. A PCC representative had visited and evaluated every PCC grant-funded diversionary initiative. The evaluation was deemed best practice nationally and provided assurance that further investment in these initiatives would lead to positive outcomes for young people.
- There was a clear set of commissioning intentions which were not limited to the EIYF. The PCC supported a range of programmes and services focused on vulnerability factors and early

intervention and prevention activity.

- Serious Violence was already a priority within the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan. As part of Building a More Secure West Mercia, the PCC had committed to focusing on the most serious crimes committed against individuals and the most vulnerable in society.
- A number of existing PCC-driven partnership forums and projects involved close working relationships with health. The PCC also funded CSP's in which health were a statutory partner. The PCC had established strong working relationships with Public Health, particularly in respect of serious violence within a domestic setting. This included the co-commissioning of the Drive project together with a multi-agency funding bid to support children affected by domestic abuse and domestic abuse specialists working within A&E.
- Increased collaborative working with health partners was still an area requiring further work to ensure better alignment between services.

Main discussion points

- A Panel Member asked why the Report didn't include detection rates of offences as well as recording rates. The PCC advised that the Report was setting out the threat, not how the crimes were being solved. Although detection rates were outside of the remit of the Report, the PCC advised that they were not as good as the public would wish to see, however, for the most serious crimes eg murder, the detection rates for the calendar year were good and two thirds had already been through the court process. The PCC agreed to consider if data could be provided to the Panel in respect of detection and conviction rates for serious violence crimes.
- There was a question about how partners could work together to develop greater knowledge, understanding and information sharing about the night time economy. The PCC advised that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection findings into police effectiveness had recognised that this wasn't as good as it should be and that there was insufficient recognition and understanding by partners and more work to be done by West Mercia Police to enable this to happen. SOCJAGs, better engagement with CSP's and

- local leaders would be helpful in improving this.
- The PCC drew the Panel's attention to paragraph 15 (first bullet point) which stated that the highest rates of knife crime occurred between 23:00 – 01:00 hrs. Knife crime was often linked to the night time economy but, in West Mercia only 3% of offences were committed near night time venues. The PCC emphasised that although these offences weren't happening in night time venues, they were happening around them and it was important to have better understanding of licencing decisions being made by District Councils.
 - The PCC referred to the analysis in respect of the link between homelessness and serious violence. The analysis concluded that individuals with no fixed address generated a disproportionate demand on custody. However, those individuals were primarily involved in acquisitive offences with little evidence of serious violent offending. There was more work to be done to determine the reasons for homelessness and to help people and partners to work together collectively to address this. The PCC was confident that at tactical level information sharing was happening successfully. However, information sharing at a governance level needed to improve. The DPCC further added that in West Mercia, the links with homelessness related to shoplifting and anti-social behaviour rather than serious violence.
 - It was noted that there was an error in paragraph 28 of the Report. The PCC had funded £12,500 and the Home Office had provided a grant of £12,500 towards the Strategic Framework Review rather than the PCC funding the total £25,000.
 - A member expressed concern that over 95% of reported County Lines offences originated from the West Midlands force area. The PCC explained that identifying where the threats to West Mercia originated from was important to prevention tactics. The PCC also explained that he worked collaboratively with Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) for the West Midlands to ensure there was good tactical oversight of the problem.
 - The PCC was asked whether he was aware of an increasing number of temporary placements for the homeless and the associated safeguarding issues around those placements. The PCC wasn't aware of a problem as such and believed that appropriate systems should be in place to support those issues.

269 **Police & Crime
Plan Activity
and
Performance**

- The PCC was asked how many of the 710 possession of weapons offences recorded in West Mercia in 2017/18 had resulted in a conviction? The PCC agreed to look at the conviction rates but reminded the Panel that the 710 crimes included 'other firearms' offences too.
- During the discussion about the development of a long term strategy for restorative justice the PCC explained that restorative justice was about enabling a victim to move on with their life, which didn't necessarily mean that a crime would result in a conviction; it was about the right outcome. He believed that restorative justice hadn't gone as far as it could and that in West Mercia it applied to a relatively low number. The prevention work with young people to help them to understand the impact of their behaviour and prevent them becoming adult criminals was important.
- The PCC's commissioning intentions were part of a very clear programme of projects with each having clear outcomes but not necessarily fixed timescales, it was about the outcomes being appropriate.
- The PCC was confident that there was appropriate sharing of information between partners but still work to do around partners understanding each other's priorities.
- A member referred to County Lines and asked why the focus of support was often on young people when the average age of victims was 39, often with complex needs, chaotic lives and poor decision making. The PCC explained that the emphasis on young people was about focusing on early help to try and prevent future crime.
- It was confirmed Project Athena, which had been the biggest change in Police IT in West Mercia for three generations, had experienced teething problems and challenges but that they were being fully understood and addressed in order to maximise the benefit of the new system for the community. There was a risk to the Budget in terms of realising benefits as soon as they should be. The Panel requested a briefing on Project Athena progress and its uses. The PCC agreed to consider this request.

The Panel was invited to consider the Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report for June to August 2018 and determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny or make any comments.

Monitoring Report (June - August 2018)

The PCC introduced the Report and drew the Panel's attention his commitment to recruit an additional 100 officers, which would take officer numbers from 1930 to 2030. Recruitment to fill the extra posts would begin as soon as possible, and was in addition to existing recruitment plans in West Mercia. Demand was increasing in all police forces and these additional officers would help to ensure that West Mercia's communities received the service they needed and that the force had the resilience to cope with changing demands. West Mercia Police still had efficiencies to find in the coming years, but the PCC was able to make this investment in frontline services now through a combination of continued reform, effective use of reserves and council tax flexibility.

Discussion points

- It was confirmed that when the PCC was elected, there were 1988 police officer posts and that PCSO's numbers would remain the same.
- A member suggested that previously when the Police Authority was in existence, at one point there were 2180 police officers.
- The PCC was asked if he had an upper limit of Police Officers he was aiming to have in post. The PCC advised that he didn't have an upper limit in mind, but was committed to having the right number of police officers and the appropriate resources to ensure this happened.
- It was hoped that the additional 100 posts would have been recruited and training would have commenced by the end of the financial year.
- A member suggested that West Mercia had 8.5 police officers per 100,000 of population (one of the lowest ratios in the Country) and questioned whether this could be considered as sufficient. The PCC advised that West Mercia had a high level of Council Tax per house and a low grant per head of population and there needed to be a fairer way to fund the Service nationally.
- The PCC confirmed his commitment for buildings within the West Mercia Estate to become wherever possible, shared buildings to maximise the benefits. It was agreed that an update on Estate profile would be provided to the Panel as part of the Budget process.
- Further to a question from a member, the PCC's suggested that the changes to the remand court process ie to centralise remand cases for West

Mercia to Kidderminster worked in theory but not in reality. The intention of the change was to reduce the length of the court process but as West Mercia was a very large area, this was not proving to be the case. There were delays with paperwork, increased travel time, increased number of remote advocates and Kidderminster struggling to cope with demand. A member of Panel invited the PCC to submit his views in this area to House of Lords Select Committee, which was looking at rural economies in Herefordshire which included local justice.

- A member suggested that justice for local people should be for local people and remain local.
- A Panel Member referred to a Staff survey carried out by Durham University Business School and suggested that it indicated that West Mercia had the lowest levels of staff morale in the Country. The PCC pointed out that although there had only been a 27% response rate, it was indicative of a worrying trend about the pressures placed on Police Officers. In his view, morale was more than increasing the number of police officers in post but other things such as organisational fairness, how views were heard, working environment and having the correct tools to carry out the job effectively. The PCC acknowledged that there was much more work to do.
- It was acknowledged that the Police Cadet Scheme was a worthwhile programme aimed at young people to give them a practical understanding of policing, develop their spirit of adventure and good citizenship, while supporting their local policing priorities through volunteering. There did however, need to be more emphasis on encouraging young people from harder to reach groups to join the Scheme. The PCC agreed to circulate the details about the Scheme to the Panel.
- The PCC referred to Appendix 2 Extract of Police Performance Summary April – June 2018 and advised that recording of crime continued to be tighter than it had ever been and it was likely that there would be a crime data inspection in the coming months. Satisfaction rates in West Mercia were good, but needed to be better particularly in respect of follow-up; however, there were clear strategies for improvement in place.
- The Panel were reminded that the main Performance Summary, which was a large detailed report, was available for members to

access online as part of the Agenda and contained the direction of travel and background data for reported performance.

- In response to a members concern about the Chief Constable advocating the removal of the comfort zone (10% +2 mph) when exceeding speed limits, the PCC pointed out that the Chief Constable was involved with this work in his role as the lead for the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) on road policing, not specifically West Mercia.

270 **Complaints
2017-18 Annual
Report**

The Panel noted the Complaints 2017-18 Annual Report.

271 **National
Association of
Police Fire and
Crime Panels**

It was agreed that Councillor Bowen would be the Panel's nominated representative on the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels.

The meeting ended at 3.05 pm

Chairman