

## **West Mercia Police and Crime Panel**

### **Tuesday, 27 November 2018, - 1.30 pm**

#### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Tony Baker, Cllr Gwilym Butler, Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Mrs Carole Clive, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Karen May, Cllr Gareth Prosser, Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Cllr Kuldip Sahota, Cllr Juliet Smith, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Cllr Dave Tremellen, Colonel Tony Ward OBE, Cllr Brian Wilcox and Cllr Michael Wood (Vice Chairman)

#### **Also attended:**

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner  
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner  
Martin Evans, Assistant Chief Constable, West Mercia Police  
Jacqueline Irvin, Office of the 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 29 October 2018 (previously circulated).

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

#### **278 Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Gwilym Butler had replaced Councillor Gerald Dakin (Shropshire Council) as a co-opted member.

#### **279 Named Substitutes**

None.

#### **280 Apologies and**

No apologies were received.

	<p>Declarations of interest were made as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gareth Prosser was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a West Mercia Police Pension</li> <li>• Steve Mackay was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police).</li> </ul>
<p><b>281 Public Participation</b></p>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>282 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting</b></p>	<p>The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 October 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.</p>
<p><b>283 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) 'PEEL: Police Effectiveness 2017 An Inspection Of West Mercia Police' - Update Report</b></p>	<p>In March 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published its inspection findings into police effectiveness as part of its annual rolling programme of inspections on the efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of police forces within England and Wales (PEEL).</p> <p>The PEEL Inspection Reports provided a judgement grade of 'outstanding', 'good' 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. Each force was given an overall grading as well as individual grades for each of the key areas which were subject to inspection in that year. The overall grading for West Mercia in March 2018 was 'requires improvement' with a rating of 'inadequate' for tackling serious and organised crime.</p> <p>The Panel received an initial report in June 2018, which outlined the areas for improvement and recommendations identified by HMICFRS and subsequently requested an update on the ongoing actions.</p> <p>The Panel was reminded that HMICFRS identified six areas for improvement (AFIs) and five recommendations: 'Preventing Crime and Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour' (ASB) and 'Protecting Vulnerable People and Supporting Victims' with each having 3 AFIs and 'Tackling Serious and Organised Crime' which had 5 recommendations.</p> <p>The PCC advised that there was continued oversight and scrutiny of the Force's response to the Inspection findings and he was pleased with the progress made to date and direction of travel. He reported that he had recently attended the HMIC Police Performance</p>

Oversight Group with the Chief Constable and received feedback from Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI). Looking ahead it would be important to embed and sustain the momentum of the progress.

Main Discussion Points:

- A Member referred to paragraph 15 of the Agenda Report about the NPCC/College of Police National Pilot for the telephone resolution of very low-level domestic abuse cases, where the deployment of an officer may not be necessary. It was questioned whether this was an appropriate direction of travel for domestic abuse even at low level. Reassurance was given that there was a commitment to ensure that victims received the best and most appropriate service and sometimes an initial quick telephone response could be helpful in terms of starting the engagement process with victims. The Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) reiterated that it was only a pilot at this stage for low level cases of domestic abuse and would be carefully monitored.
- Paragraph 10 of the Report referred to the support that West Mercia Police received from Durham Police and asked about the reasons for Durham's success. The PCC explained that that the financial resource per head of population was significantly higher in Durham than in West Mercia, however best practice was picked up from a variety of other sources as well as Durham and was always challenged by the Force as appropriate.
- It was noted that there was a high proportion of crimes relating to domestic abuse, where the victim didn't wish to progress police action. A member asked how the detail of this was discussed in the holding to account sessions that the PCC held with the Chief Constable. The PCC advised the Panel that although these cases were complex and multi-faceted, the Chief Constable (CC) in the Holding to Account Sessions had reassured the PCC, that there was an oversight of the reporting of these cases and safeguards were in place to explain options and support victims if they changed their minds.
- A Panel Member expressed concern about rural crime in the community and the lack of Police response to a reported crime. It was suggested that in some cases, gangs were causing the rural crime, so could be classed as serious organised

crime. The PCC confirmed that the Police would always investigate a crime if there was an ability to do so, he believed however, that communities weren't always aware how the Police had responded to a reported crime and acknowledged that this was a gap in Service that needed addressing. He further explained that not every crime would be solvable and the emphasis needed to be on those crimes causing the most serious harm in the community. The PCC urged Panel Members to encourage their communities to discuss their concerns locally with Inspectors and if the issue remained unresolved to contact the PCC directly.

- The impression that rural communities had about the Police's attitude to rural crime was that the Police didn't care. The PCC reiterated that he, the CC and Police Officers did care about rural crime, but the reaction of the Police would always be proportionate to the crime and it wasn't always possible to convert a reported crime into a criminal outcome.
- The PCC acknowledged that it could be difficult to change a community's negative perception of the Police, but it was important to continue to encourage communities to report crime, which would in time build confidence.
- A Member referred to the House of Commons Library – Police Service Strength Report (October 2018) and in particular the table which showed Police Officer Strength in England and Wales, at 31 March 2018 (full time equivalents; including long term absentees). He suggested that comparatively, for West Mercia that police strength was at its lowest level ever. The PCC responded that this was not the case, however there was less resource to work with than previously and it was important to work within the resources available. The PCC also stressed that the world had moved on and mobile working and the increased use of technology provided opportunities for different ways of working. He outlined initiatives such as local policing teams and dedicated rural crime officers which aimed to build confidence in the community about acting on intelligence and reports made to the Police. The reduced number of police officers didn't necessarily impose greater risks to the community.
- Paragraphs 29 and 30 of the Agenda Report referred to the Serious and Organised Crime

(SOC) Peer Review which had taken place in October and the reality testing which had taken place in June. The ACC explained how this was working with examples, but advised that this was a challenge for West Mercia given its geographical size.

The PCC referred to the Panel's request at its September meeting for an overview of the Athena Programme as part of the wider ICT Programme.

Main Discussion Points:

- A Panel Member expressed disappointment that Athena had required a number of interventions and was concerned about whether the system would eventually be fit for purpose and the overall costs involved in getting it right. The PCC reassured the Panel that the System was doing what it was intended it should do. It combined four modules: investigation, intelligence, case and custody and there were some process issues across all four modules, but it wasn't failing a system. The software was fast becoming a national solution and West Mercia would not revert back to the old systems, which were not fit for purpose. The PCC acknowledged that on occasions it had been necessary to look at temporary wrap around solutions to mitigate the impact on staff.
- 9 Police Forces were part of the Athena Management Organisation (AMO) Consortium but other Forces had purchased the System outside of the Consortium. Eventually, 27 forces would be procuring Athena in different ways.
- The PCC confirmed that the total cost of Athena was significant and included the Change Programme as well as the licences, but he didn't have the exact amount available at the meeting.
- One of the interventions which had recently been approved was a File Builder outside of Athena which had been piloted in Shropshire and was being rolled-out across West Mercia. It was estimated that this would remove three quarters of the criminal justice based Athena tasks, which were currently undertaken by officers. One of the benefits discussed in respect of this change was staff morale, which it was envisaged would improve. It was likely that this system would remain in place until the new Digital File Builder was available in Athena which was likely to be

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early 2020.

- The PCC confirmed that there were no plans to withdraw from the AMO Consortium.
- The Panel was reassured by the PCC the 9 Members of the AMO Consortium all used the same product, worked together on changes to the Athena, which were properly programmed and appropriately funded.
- It was confirmed that no changes were envisaged to the AMO Consortium as a result of the notice given by West Mercia to Warwickshire of its intention to withdraw from the Strategic Alliance. The arrangements in respect of Athena were contractual. It was however, noted that there was a risk to the West Mercia infrastructure as a result of the Alliance failing to deliver IT investment in the infrastructure. There had been spend on patching, but it was necessary to carry out a root and branches review of the infrastructure to bring it up to date – the associated costs for this would be significant.

The Report was noted.

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

The PCC introduced the Report and highlighted the following key developments:

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) service – the PCC agreed £445,625 of funding for West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to deliver a CSE service across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire to those identified as at risk, or a victim of CSE. WMRSASC would deliver a complete wrap around service to assist the young people to cope and recover. The Victims Commissioner (VC) was recently complimentary about the West Mercia Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs). The PCC was mutually supportive to the VC in the quest for the voice of the victim to be heard more loudly.
- The PCC had decided that a proportion of the Safer Roads Partnership (SRP) reserves would be used to provide both a targeted and strategic funding opportunity to address the rising number of people killed and seriously injured on West

Mercia's roads.

- The Early Intervention Youth Fund bid, jointly made with West Midlands, Warwickshire and Staffordshire, was declined by the Home Office. This was the first round of grants for this fund and the 6 successful bids were targeted solely on major cities.
- Spice Review – The classification of Synthetic Cannabinoids ('Spice') would be reviewed as part of a series of national initiatives around drugs. The PCC had pushed for 'Spice' and other synthetic cannabinoids to be reclassified as Class A drugs; due to the devastating impact they could have on users and wider communities.
- Confidence survey - Quarter two results on the PCC's Confidence survey continued to suggest a high level of public confidence in West Mercia Police (85%). However, it would be two more quarters until the desired confidence levels and intervals had been built up and therefore fully reliable.
- Town and Parish Council Survey - the results from this survey had been published. The PCC was disappointed with some of the responses but planned to repeat the survey annually.
- Strategic Alliance update – In October, the PCC and the Chief Constable formally notified their Warwickshire counterparts of their decision to withdraw from the strategic alliance between West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police. This carefully considered decision was made to ensure the public get better value for money, with a greater clarity and focus at a local level. This decision was discussed by the PCP at its meeting at 29 October. The two PCCs and Chief Constables had recently met and agreed to negotiate an exit strategy for the alliance based around three options of shared, hosted or stand-alone service provision, assessed function by function.

#### Discussion points

- The PCC confirmed that in respect of the use of the SRP Reserves, the £500,000 being invested by the PCC must be spent on projects that were over and above the statutory remit in addressing harm caused by collisions and able to demonstrate outputs and outcomes before March 2020. £150,000 was being invested in the Local Policing and Community Ambassadors Fund

(LPCAF) for safer roads and £350,000 would be made available for larger West Mercia wide projects or localised projects requiring a larger sum of money to make a difference.

- The PCC didn't envisage that there would be any financial savings to be made as a result of the splitting of the Alliance; it was about improving the effective use of resources in West Mercia.
- During the last quarter 86% of those emergency incidents which received a response had a 20 minute response time. The PCC advised that response times were improving and were subject to close monitoring.
- The PCC was successful in securing two small pots of funding from the Police Transformation Fund to address Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT). For maximum impact and effectiveness, it was important to work with Community Safety Partnership's (CSP's) and partners and the ACC gave the Panel some examples of local work with partners.
- It was suggested that the 23% response rate for the Town and Parish Council Survey was not a particularly valid response rate for a questionnaire of its type, where a 65% response rate was required to make it valid. It was therefore suggested to the PCC that consideration should be given to the method of distribution deployed next year to increase the response rate.
- With reference to Appendix 3 Performance Summary, it was noted that there was a 10% increase in rural crime on the previous quarter and for business crime 3,063 business crimes were recorded in the last quarter, which was a 6% reduction on the previous quarter (3,245) but above the quarter average (2,668). The role of the Rural and Business Crime Officers was discussed and the PCC thought that they were doing some really good visible work, but there weren't enough of them.
- The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for answering 999 calls was 90% in 10 seconds and for 101 calls was 80% in 30 seconds. For the w/e 25 November 2018, 92.5% 999 calls were answered in 30 seconds and 77.5% of 101 calls were answered in 30 seconds. Performance overall was satisfactory, but there would be peak periods where there were delays.
- With regard to the Parish Survey, the PCC suggested that in respect of police visibility, people will express their views at Parish Council

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meetings, but it was also important to complete the survey. The PCC asked councillors to urge Parish Councils to respond to the Survey.

- It was suggested that the effectiveness of the Assault on Emergency Workers Bill would depend on court action when incidents were reported.
- To date, the PCC confirmed that no meaningful progress had been made by the courts service in respect of the criminal justice system and witnesses being able to appear by appearing by video link. However the service was discussing this with the PCC
- It was confirmed that there would be no impact to any West Mercia initiatives as a result of being unable to secure the Early Intervention Youth Fund bid.
- The PCC was asked about public confidence in respect of the all England Survey which suggested that confidence was down nationally but locally looked better. The PCC agreed to provide a considered response in due course.

The Report was noted.

The Report was noted.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm

Chairman .....