

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Thursday, 7 February 2019, - 11.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Cllr S J Mackay (Chairman), Cllr Bronwen Behan, Cllr Gwilym Butler, Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Mrs Carole Clive, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Gareth Prosser, Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Cllr James Stanley, Cllr Emma Stokes, Colonel Tony Ward OBE, Cllr Brian Wilcox and Cllr Michael Wood (Vice Chairman)

Also attended:

Anthony Bangham, Chief Constable, West Mercia Police
John Campion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
Elizabeth Hall, 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. Presentation handouts for West Mercia Budget 2019/20 Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2021/22 and Proposed Precept for 2019/20 (circulated at the Meeting)
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 November 2018 (previously circulated).

(Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

287 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

288 Named Substitutes

Cllr Bronwen Behan was a named substitute for Cllr Tony Baker (Malvern Hills District Council).

289 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Tony Baker, Karen May, Kuldip Sahota, Juliet Smith and Dave Tremellen.

		Declarations of interest were made as follows:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gareth Prosser was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a West Mercia Police Pension Steve Mackay was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police).
290	Public Participation	None.
291	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 October 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the penultimate bullet point of Minute Number 285 (page 8 of the Agenda) being amended to read "92.5% 999 calls were answered in 10 seconds (rather than 30 seconds).
292	West Mercia Budget 2019/20 Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2021/22 and Proposed Precept for 2019/20	<p>The Panel was asked to consider the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) West Mercia Budget 2019/20, Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2019/20 to 2021/22 and the proposed precept for 2019/20 (ii) Report of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group; and (iii) provide a report to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on the proposed precept, including any recommendations, outlining whether it vetoed the precept or not. <p><u>The PCC's presentation the West Mercia Budget 2019/20, Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2021/22</u></p> <p>The PCC presented the key headlines to the Panel (copies of the presentation slides were circulated to the Panel) as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> £224.6m Net Revenue Budget for 2019/20, which was a significant increase in spend of £13m 2,145 Police Officer Posts for 2019/20, an increase of 215 Police Officers from the 2018/19 MTFP £216.66 per year average Band D Council Tax, an increase of £19.59 £5.7m reserves used (an increase of £1m from the 2018/19 MTFP) £122.5m Govt Grant (an increase of £2.3m from 2018/19 MTFP) <p>This was in the context of:</p>

- Increased demand (+8% calls for service, +15% non-crime since 2014)
- Inflation: Consumer Price Index (CPI) 2.3%, Retail Price Index (RPI) 3.2% (November 2018 figures)
- 2% Police Pay Award
- Increased Employers Contribution for Police Pensions
- ICT infrastructure/reform

The proposals were funded as follows:

- £96.4m (43%) from Council Tax (including Collection Fund Surplus) (Proposed 9.94% (£19.59 average) Council Tax increase which would generate an additional £5.8m revenue. (West Mercia was proposing the 2nd lowest increase in England and Wales)
- £122.5m (55%) Government Grant which included an additional £2.3m (the first increase since 2010)
- £5.7m (3%) contribution from Reserves. It was noted that the Reserves were within acceptable limits.

The PCC advised that the additional police officer posts would be filled as quickly as possible to ensure maximum community benefit, he would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account and assured the Panel that the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers would be protected.

The Chief Constable emphasised that the proposed allocation of the 115 additional police officers was over and above retiring police officers and would be allocated according to service demand (the detail of the proposed allocation by area was shown on slide 9 of the presentation). He explained that it was hoped that the additional officers would help to increase victim satisfaction, improve response time to emergency incidents, reduce the levels of un-resourced incidents and increase public confidence.

The PCC also mentioned the additional £3m savings over the MTFP required for reforming West Mercia which would be achieved by a reduction in estate cost, ICT investment and changes with the policing Alliance with Warwickshire.

In respect of victims and commissioning, an additional £200k had been invested in a new Victims Advice line which would be launched in April 2019, an additional £1m had been invested in the Commissioning Fund and there

would be some additional dedicated Rural and Business Crime Officers.

Finally, the PCC advised that 75% of responses to the Budget Consultation were supportive of the precept proposal, a variety of methods had been used for the consultation and community feedback was supportive of increase in police officer visibility and additional focus on rural crime.

Budget Scrutiny Task Group Feedback (Lead Member Cllr Bowen)

Cllr Bowen advised that during December 2018 and January 2019, a Task Group with support from a Worcestershire County Council Senior Finance Officer met with the PCC and his officers to discuss the proposed budget for 2019/2020, the MTFP through to 2021/2022 and the proposed Precept for 2019/20 in context of the Policing Plan and the Commissioner's election promises. The key areas highlighted were the:

- Task Group's disappointment and concern about the proposed significant increase in the precept of almost 10% (£19.59), particularly when last year the Panel was advised that the increase would be no more than 3%. The Task Group hoped that the increase in Police Officer numbers would go some way toward reassuring the public that the increased police presence would improve service delivery
- Financial risks posed by the Athena IT System
- Implications of the withdrawal from the Strategic Alliance arrangements with Warwickshire
- Effectiveness of the investment in victims and commissioning
- Recruitment of additional Rural and Business Crime Officers (rural crime especially on farms and in villages being a major local concern)
- Major savings programme and the impact of any delays in achieving on the budget
- Outcome of the national future spending review
- Government grant towards meeting the costs of Police pensions of this was currently a one-off.

In conclusion, the Task Group was supportive of the PCC's financial strategy for the Budget Proposals for 2019/20 and the MTFP through to 2021/22 in the context of the West Mercia Policing Plan. They believed that the PCC had addressed public concern about the number of police officers, by increasing funding through the precept.

The Task Group would like to meet again with the PCC mid-way through the financial year to review the impact and effectiveness of the spending proposals, including the £200k investment in victim support, recruitment to the additional posts for rural and business crime officers and an update on the Athena project. The would also like to examine the impact of the additional £1m Commissioning pot both in terms of monitoring arrangements and impact.

Cllr Bowen thanked the PCC and his staff for the clarity provided and their time in facilitating the Task Group meetings.

Discussion

- It was questioned whether the budget would be amended to reflect the projected £4m savings if the judicial review found in favour of the PCC taking on the fire governance role. The PCC confirmed that the budget didn't take into account fire governance as no decision had yet been made
- In response to the question about how much would be saved as a result of West Mercia Police withdrawing from the strategic alliance with Warwickshire, the PCC advised that withdrawing from the alliance was about the effective and efficient use of resources not savings. He believed in effective collaboration with Warwickshire but the current arrangements led to West Mercia subsidising the Warwickshire force for some services
- The PCC was asked about the demograph of the respondents to the Consultation, he explained that he did know the make up of some respondents eg those who responded through social media, but not all respondents. The Consultation, however had been shared with Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire County Association of Local Councils (CALC's) and there had been a better response to the Consultation this year than in previous years. Whilst not a significant response to the Consultation, there was in general support for the proposals. It was confirmed that PCSO's didn't promote the Consultation
- It was confirmed that the £5m budgeted for staff turnover equated to approximately 140 police officers
- A Member pointed out that a 10% (9.94% equating to £19.59) increase was a major hit for

residents, particularly when last year the Panel was advised that the increase would be no more than 3%. The PCC was asked whether the increase could be 'smoothed' by having a phased approach to the recruitment of the additional police officers over the 2019/20 period, thus spreading the cost to residents. The PCC advised that unfortunately, this wasn't possible as it would be predicated on what Government may or may not fund next year. This year the PCC had sufficient flexibility to respond to the Chief Constable's request for additional police officers and may not have the same flexibility next. The PCC further pointed out that the increase equated to £1.63 (for Band D) extra per month and he believed that there was public support for the proposal and it was the right thing to do

- Whilst acknowledging the PCC's point of view, the Member went on to point out that there were several one-off items of big expenditure for this year eg £5m police officers' pensions, £5m for ICT and Capital and £5m for the additional police officer posts, he reiterated his request for the PCC to consider spreading the costs of recruitment over a longer period. The PCC confirmed that he wasn't prepared to take the risk that Government may not give precept flexibility next year and stood by the proposed additional investment, which the public were supportive of
- A Member pointed out that local Councillors take the flack for increases in Council Tax and this increase would affect residents, who were only just managing to make ends meet. The PCC maintained that he was directly accountable for his actions as he was in an elected position. He also pointed out that Councils could choose to reduce the burden to the taxpayer if they so wished
- The PCC was asked to clarify the situation in respect of his ongoing relationship with Crimestoppers. The DPCC advised that the Crimestoppers anonymous telephone number was funded by the West Mercia Police Force and would continue. The Regional Managers and Fearless Workers were additional options which could be purchased, if locally determined
- It was confirmed that the recruitment of the additional police officers was a matter for the Chief Constable, who was confident with the recruitment plans which were in place. The PCC was impressed with the plans in place and

progress made so far, with all courses to date being full. The PCC thought that the main risk with the additional recruitment was about maintaining the police officer numbers in the longer term. It was suggested that the Budget Task Group should receive an update on this when the Budget Task Group met with the PCC mid-way through the year

- The Chief Constable reassured the Panel that the plans for recruitment were achievable in the timescales set. 6 courses for recruitment were currently being run at one time (rather than 1 course) and because of the splitting of the strategic alliance, less courses were mixed with Warwickshire officers and 20 course spaces were being allocated to West Mercia. The Chief Constable also reassured the Panel that as police officer numbers increased and police shifts got back to full strength, there would be more focus on staff specialisms such as sexual offences and CSE
- It would be possible to use Apprenticeship Levy from August this year when the Policing Education Qualification Framework commenced. This would offer alternative routes for employment
- A Councillor referred to paragraph 1 on page 30 of the Agenda “...it has become increasingly clear that aspects of police ICT and estates have not had sufficient scrutiny of investment for some time.....” He gave a local example of where dealing with an estates matter in a more timely manner by both the PCC and the Council concerned could have been of mutual benefit. The PCC pointed out that relationships and negotiations were sometimes tricky, particularly for estate matters, but an Estates Manager had been recently appointed which he hoped would allow for a greater focus in this area
- A member asked whether the vetting procedure for new officers would have a knock-on effect on the cyclical vetting of existing officers. It was confirmed that vetting process was in the best position it had been in for a number of years. All backlogs had been cleared and vetting was up to date
- The PCC was asked about the how the impact of additional officers recruited would be measured and reported to the Panel. The PCC confirmed that recording mechanisms were in place for increased victim satisfaction, improved response times to emergency incidents and reducing levels

of un-resources incidents and would be reported in the quarterly performance monitoring report. In addition, there was some additional work to do around increased public confidence and visibility which would be carried out via survey.

Decision

Following the discussion, it was agreed that:

- While concerned at the apparent high percentage increase, the Panel was unanimous in its decision to approve both the precept for 2019/20 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2019/22 as presented to the meeting;
- A key feature of the reason for the increase in precept was the recruitment of 115 new Police Officers and a concern to the Panel was the rate at which these could be recruited and the subsequent delay in them becoming operational;
- Additionally, the Panel accepted the proposal from the Task Group authorising it to revisit the budget with the PCC later in the 2019/20 financial year to review the impact and effectiveness of the spending proposals. This would include the £200k investment in the Victim Advice Line; recruitment to the additional posts both of Police Officers generally and the additional posts for Rural and Business crime officers as well as an update on the Athena project.

A letter informing the PCC of the Panel's decision would be sent. It was noted that the PCC was required to have regard to the Panel's report and provide a response which would be published.

293 Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report (October - December 2018)

The Panel was invited to consider the Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report for October to December 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:

- The West Mercia's new Victim Advice Line (VAL) which was due to go live on 1 April 2019
- Strategic Alliance – a dedicated programme team had been set up to develop service delivery options for every shared area of policing within the alliance. The options development stage was due

to be completed at the end of February with decisions on future arrangements to be made in March

- Services to Policing - In 2017 West Mercia and Warwickshire committed to preparing a business case for the redesign of the support services. The aim was to improve both effectiveness and efficiency of supporting services' practices that had not been reviewed holistically since the creation of the alliance in 2012. The business case was presented in September 2018 setting out how £26.9m could be saved by West Mercia over 5 years (with a commensurate proportion for Warwickshire). Warwickshire declined to support the business case then, and again when it was formally offered as a new collaboration under revised governance arrangements in October. It was therefore decided that West Mercia would prepare for stand-alone Services to Policing but Warwickshire would be able to join in these arrangements should they subsequently decide to do so
- Network redesign and upgrade (OCC, DCD and KCOM) – funds had been committed to redesign and then upgrade the force's ageing IT network. Although Warwickshire's IT network was connected to West Mercia's and was in a similar condition, Warwickshire had declined to commit further funds to these critical projects at this stage.
- West Mercia Police values and priorities – it had been agreed to simplify the organisation's values and to provide clear and concise policing priorities. These changes were launched at the beginning of the New Year and were: Public first, Ownership, Courage and Compassion.
- In early December the PCC opened the official launch event for the DRIVE project, a new response to domestic abuse that aimed to reduce the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour. Drive provided a case manager who acted as a single point of contact for perpetrators on a 1-2-1 basis. The Drive project was being jointly funded by the PCC, Worcestershire County Council Public Health and the Police Transformation Fund and was being piloted in Worcestershire. The very latest project report showed that 37 high risk perpetrators had been referred onto the Drive project. All cases were allocated a Case Manager who met regularly with the IDVA team to ensure victim/survivor safety was being managed

- throughout their involvement with the perpetrator
- Criminal Justice Performance - Several external performance products were produced by agencies and partners to enable senior officers and the PCC to maintain strategic oversight of criminal justice performance. In particular, the Local Criminal Justice Board and PCC scrutinised monthly file quality, charging, listing and court outcome reports. The latest monthly and quarterly summary reports evidenced a marked improvement in performance over time. Over the past 12 months West Mercia had seen a 54% reduction in the time it took for a criminal case to be completed in the Magistrates' court. Conviction rates in the Magistrates' court stood at 90.54%, the highest in the region and 5% higher than the National Average. A relentless focus on improving file quality and timeliness had resulted in West Mercia moving 23 places up the National Transforming Summary Justice league table. West Mercia had the highest conviction rates for Rape, Domestic Violence and Hate Crime across the West Midlands region.

Discussion points:

- A Member referred to page 99 of the Agenda (Appendix 1 - Delivery Plan Extract: B3 (Make sure the Safer Roads Partnership responds to community concerns as well as working to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads). He suggested that he thought that there was more emphasis on working to reduce deaths and serious injuries on roads than responding to community concerns. He asked if the PCC would request that the Safer Roads Partnerships consider communities' requests for mobile speeding cameras, highlighting that a sign for a mobile speeding camera operating in the area was an excellent deterrent for reducing speeding and helping communities to feel safer
- The PCC acknowledged that the perception of speeding and its anti-social nature was an issue and he had been focussing on community speed watch and gates to villages etc. The PCC added that there was a £0.5m grant available to communities to apply for in respect of initiatives to reduce accidents, but the funds couldn't be used for meeting any statutory duties. The PCC explained that in his holding to account sessions with the Chief Constable he had focused on

community speedwatch. Currently, there were 40 community speed watch schemes, which was double what the PCC had inherited when he came into office and he intended to double the number of schemes again

- The Chief Constable confirmed that speeding was a force priority and it was important to work with local communities to address the causes of it. The priority for community speed watch schemes was identified by the local policing teams
- In response to a question about what preventative crime measures the PCC was putting in place, he advised that an additional £1m had been allocated for diversionary activities and strategies were being developed for drugs, rural and serious organised crime. £0.25m had also been allocated to CCTV and some additional resources for smart water
- The point was made that although smart water was a preventative measure for crime reduction, rural crime was still an issue for communities and significant work was still to be done
- It was confirmed that the Mini officers used in local policing areas were used for short periods of time then moved around
- The Panel were pleased to note that a 54-year-old man from Worcester had become the first person in West Mercia and one of the first people in the country to be charged under the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 which came into to effect in November 2018. A Member asked if the Panel should lobby the Home Secretary or local MP's to underline that assault on emergency workers was totally unacceptable. The PCC reassured the Panel that the Home Secretary was very supportive of the legislation, but any support from local MP's was welcome
- It was suggested that the Panel may wish to establish a Task Group to investigate road safety
- Deaths on Shropshire highways was highlighted as an issue of concern and given that there was a collective responsibility for roads, the PCC was asked if he met with Highways England. The PCC confirmed that he did meet with Highways England.

The meeting ended at 1.25 pm

Chairman