

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
Wednesday, 23 July 2014
Brockington, Hereford.

Present:

Minutes

Cllr Paul Middlebrough (Wychavon) – Chairman
Cllr Keith Austin (Telford and Wrekin)
Mrs Helen Barker (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Cllr Charlotte Barnes (Shropshire)
Cllr Sebastian Bowen (Herefordshire)
Cllr Roger Evans (Shropshire)
Cllr Roger Hollingworth (Bromsgrove)
Cllr David Hughes (Malvern Hills)
Cllr Anthony Miller (Worcestershire)
Cllr Keith Roberts (Shropshire)
Col. Tony Ward OBE (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Cllr Brian Wilcox (Herefordshire)
Cllr David Wilkinson (Worcester City)

Available papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 4 February 2014 (previously circulated).

71 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed all attendees to the meeting, including new members of the Panel and members of the public. A warm welcome was extended to the Commissioner.

72 Named Substitutes

Mr Roger Evans substituted for Mr Miles Kenny.

73 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from: Mr Michael Wood (Shropshire), Mr Miles Kenny (Shropshire), Cllr Rae Evans (Telford and Wrekin), Mrs Anne Hingley (Wyre Forest).

74 Public Participation

Mr Patrick Allfrey of Worcester addressed the Panel and made comments on the Police and Crime Commissioner's and West Mercia Police's complaints handling process.

75 Confirmation of the minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel held on 4 February 2014

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 4 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

76 Annual Report of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

The Commissioner formally presented his Draft Annual Report 2013/2014 to the Panel for their consideration in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The report provided a high level overview of the Commissioner's work over the 2013/2014 period.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Tom Windsor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary had written to all Police and Crime Panels seeking their views on his consultation document on the annual PEEL inspection of Forces. It was proposed that Helen Barker chair a task and finish group to respond to the consultation with a copy of the draft response circulated to the Panel prior to its despatch.
- Concerns were expressed about the potential closure of police stations, especially ones in rural locations (e.g Ludlow) and the consequential policing coverage and service delivery in such large geographical areas. The Chief Constable advised the Panel that Ludlow was specifically being kept open and was currently the base for some parts of South Shropshire. Assurance was given that a full consultation would be undertaken when making decisions about the future of police stations. The Chief Constable stated that whilst there were fewer police bases, the response to emergency calls was getting better and visibility was increasing within communities.
- Responding to a comment about the police cadet initiative, the Commissioner stated that he had been pleased with the success of the scheme and was proud of it. The Panel was advised that there were 28 police cadet places in each policing area, and it was expected that there would be 140 police cadets in the next 12 months.

- It was commented that whilst there had been a level of scepticism about the new policing model, its implementation had been better than expected. However one concern was the lack of manning of front-desks, for example in the new facility in Bromsgrove and it was requested that this service be re-introduced. It was stated that the public was frustrated by the inaccessibility of a police station when police staff were on site. In response the Commissioner stated that keeping front desks open was not always justified, but that discussions were on-going with the Chief Constable on the matter. The Chief Constable added that a balance needed to be reached between provision of service and keeping policing both local and visible. Contact points (e.g telephone, video link) were being made available as were consideration of alternative models (such as in Malvern), but that hard choices needed to be made about brigading staff. It was suggested that consideration be given to investigating alternative models, that could include using local government personnel, libraries, hubs etc to assist the public with signposting policing matters appropriately.
- What were the implications of the significant local government reductions in the area of trading standards? The Commissioner expressed concerns about the reductions in the trading standards area, not least as trading standards had an important role in law enforcement e.g illegal imports etc. He stated that he was keen to hold meetings with trading standards representatives in order to fully appreciate the consequences of the budget reductions in an important area. The Chief Constable added that the police and trading standards needed to use their combined enforcement capability and often dealt with the same people. The trading standards budget reductions could potentially have an impact.
- What implications, if any, were there on road safety as a result of local government reducing the use of street lighting? The Chief Constable stated that fatalities on the road continued to fall however the following groups continued to be areas of concern: school age children, motorcyclists and young drivers. It was important that this reduction continued to be delivered through a range of enforcement, education and engineering work. The

impact of the reduction of street lighting was not known, but information would be sought on the issue.

- Whilst appreciating that the matter remained subject to legal proceedings; the Commissioner was asked to inform the Panel of the processes of holding the Chief Constable to account in respect of the case relating to the incident involving the police and Andrew Mitchell MP in Downing Street and the Chief Constable's subsequent involvement in the investigation. The Commissioner stated that the case did cause West Mercia Force concern. In relation to the Chief Constable's involvement, the Commissioner stated that he was briefed at the time of the Chief Constable's involvement though much of the information at that point in time was not known; the issues then escalated. The Commissioner stated that he consciously took the view that he would form a judgement when all the facts were known. This, he believed, was the right stance to take. He was confident in the actions that he had taken and the systems he had in place had helped to hold the Chief Constable to account. The systems the Commissioner had in place included a weekly meeting with the Chief Constable. A comprehensive record of the discussion was maintained and a sanitised version made publicly available on the website. To date over 300 topic areas had been discussed.
- Assurance was requested and given in respect of the systems in place to deal with complaints which the Commissioner considered to be open and transparent. The Panel was advised that the Chief Constable reported on all serious misconduct issues and that it was the Commissioner's prerogative to sit on and attend the relevant complaints body. The Commissioner advised the Panel of the establishment of a joint Trust, Ethics and Integrity Committee, with the Warwickshire Commissioner. A programme of dip sampling was also in place.
- An update was requested on the community speed watch schemes and the Panel was advised that there was the capacity to run 30 schemes in parallel across the West Mercia area and that pilots were to be completed in Herefordshire and Shropshire during September and October.

- What was the budget allocation for the police federation? The Chief Constable advised the Panel that West Mercia supported the employment of 2 FTE and made a small contribution to national funded posts. A meeting with the Police Federation was to take place imminently and the Panel would receive more detailed information on this matter.
- Had there been any increase in the number of appropriate interview suites available for victims of domestic abuse, children and vulnerable witnesses? The Chief Constable advised the Panel that he was not aware of pressures in this area and gave assurance that any concerns in this area were picked up quickly as a matter of course. The provision of SARP within Worcestershire and Telford had been successful and provided effective support.

The Chairman thanked the Commissioner and his staff for the comprehensive report. The Panel was advised that the Chairman had sought a meeting with Chairman of Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel and Warwickshire's Commissioner, Chief Constable and the Commissioner's Chief Executive. To date this meeting had not taken place and the Chairman proposed a formal resolution seeking a formal commitment from the Chairman of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel to such a meeting.

RESOLVED that the Panel:

- (a) welcomed the report of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and the responses provided to questions.**
- (b) agreed for the Chairman of the Panel to write to the Chairman of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel seek formal commitment to a meeting between the Panel Chairmen, Commissioners, Chief Constables and the Commissioners Chief Executives for both West Mercia and Warwickshire areas.**

**77 West Mercia
Police and
Crime Plan
Activity and
Performance**

The Panel was provided with an update on progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia 2013/2017, with specific focus on the time period 1 January – 30 June 2014. The Commissioner outlined that the report noted progress on his objectives; detailed performance measures and arrangements; and outlined

Monitoring Report

his other key activities.

The Panel was advised that the business and rural crime strategies were both of great importance and that all CSPs had oversight and governance roles around the strategies. The delivery plans for the strategies were due to be published in September/October. A strategic board (also covering Warwickshire) had been established which included representatives from the NFU, chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business. A budget of £1.5m (identified from reserves) was in place to support the delivery of the business and rural crime strategies (to include cyber crime), and their delivery plans were to be costed. Members were advised that work was being undertaken on a regional and national level to tackle cyber-crime and that the development of a strategy was being considered which would focus on prevention; several businesses in the West Mercia (around Malvern) had received accreditation around the area of cyber security.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Assurance was sought and given that the Commissioner had been engaging with the relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) on the relevant strategies and that it was hoped that the LEPs would be part of the delivery plans
- Responding to a question about concerns around the new arrangements for the probation service and ensuring effective scrutiny around reducing re-offending, the Panel was advised that this matter was of concern nationally to Commissioners, and whilst Commissioners did not have express powers they were focussing on inputting constructively into the ongoing development of the contracts and new structures. It was stated that it was in everyone's best interests to ensure the new structures worked well and it was emphasised that there was much dedication in the West Mercia area to ensure that it was as positive a change as possible. It was stated that a progress report be provided at the December 2014 Panel meeting.
- The Chief Constable provided assurance to the Panel that the Strategic policing requirement was not impacting on local policing provision
- In relation to concerns raised about anti-social behaviour and what measures were in place in

**78 Finance Update
Quarter 4
2013/14**

particular to address the problem of beggars in towns, the Chief Constable advised that he would look into the matter

- Responding to a question about custody visits, the Commissioner advised the Panel that much work had been done in this area. Some facilities (e.g Redditch) had closed, with others (e.g Kidderminster) upgraded.

RESOLVED that the Panel receives the report of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Panel considered a report which outlined the final year end position on the revenue and capital financial outturn for 2013/2014; a progress update on the alliance programme (2011-2015) and a governance and development update for the programme (2015-2019)

The key points highlighted to the Panel included:

- the Revenue underspend of £10m across the alliance
- the flexibility built in around the support budget in future years on police and crime initiatives
- an in year favourable variance – capital projects and borrowing in 2013/14 had helped offset future costs in revenue budget
- a £5m variance relating to the income budget (to be subject to annual review)
- a slippage in the capital expenditure due to; over optimistic delivery plans, the approval of the estates plan, a focus on implementing the new policing model and requirements for detailed business cases.
- Long term financial position remained challenging with a further gap of £29m emerging from 2015/16 onwards across the alliance.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Had the allocated staffing budget been spent, would performance have been better? The Chief Constable stated that a good service was being delivered despite reductions in the budget. Whilst he would not wish to underspend the staffing budget, the position demonstrated that a good service could be sustained. A second round of internal recruitment was being undertaken following a successful first round. The Panel was advised that it was possible that additional investment may be required to bolster 'back room' staff in order to deliver front line services.

- Responding a question relating to Police Officers' use of tetratabs, the Chief Constable stated that the mobile nature of these devices meant that officers did not need to return to the office as regularly as in the past. Whilst coverage was very good, where the signal was poor, officers could continue to use the devices off-line. The devices continued to be rolled out across the West Mercia region and it was hoped that the signal strength would continue to improve as the emergency services networks developed.
- Responding to a question about figures relating to reported crimes, the Chief Constable stated that, as a generality, the more crime was reported, the better the Force could protect the public. There was evidence to support the fact that rural crime was not well reported. There had been an increase in the reporting of crimes relating to sexual offences, due in part to the awareness raised through the media coverage of the investigation into historic cases. The Panel was advised that the British Crime Survey, which measures the extent of crime by asking people whether they had experienced any crime in the past year, continued to report a reduction in the most categories of crime.

RESOLVED that the Panel receives the Finance Update.

79 Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

The Panel received a briefing on the new requirements for Police and Crime Commissioners contained within the new Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Act provided for six new anti-social behaviour powers and two new measures, the community trigger and the community remedy, that aimed to give victims a greater say in the way their reports were dealt with.

In discussion concerns were expressed about illegal encampments and the lack of power that local authorities and police had to deal with such situations within the immediate timescales. It was stated that a clear approach was needed to ensure that illegal encampments could be dealt with fairly and promptly in order that communities did not suffer the often negative effects of criminal damage and anti-social behaviour. The cost to and time spent by local authorities of seeking court action to deal with illegal encampments was great. The Panel was advised that new legislation, which may create an opportunity to approach the issue more creatively, was imminent. The Commissioner had

80 **Policing
Domestic
Abuse**

approached his counterparts on the issue to assess the extent of this problem. It was agreed that the Commissioner's office arranged an informal seminar/briefing on this subject.

RESOLVED that the Panel receives the report on the Commissioner's new requirements contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and that an informal seminar be arranged to consider action around illegal encampments.

Detective Chief Superintendent Damian Pettit of the Protecting Vulnerable People Department provided the Panel with a presentation on West Mercia Police's approach to policing domestic abuse. The definition of domestic abuse was 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional'. The definition recognised the deprivation of liberties – making an individual more dependent and less independent.

A copy of the presentation given is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

In the discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- The presentation demonstrated the complexity of the issues around domestic abuse. It was important to consider the role of local government had around service delivery and the provision of support to organisations dealing with incidents of abuse.
- It was reassuring to note the programmes in place to support victims within the West Mercia area and it was recognised that education and awareness of domestic abuse was key in encouraging victims to come forward and to address their situation. It was recognised that the area of domestic abuse was challenging, not least due to the victim often re-entering the abusive relationship. Much work was undertaken, between several agencies, to achieve positive outcomes for the victims and to safeguard any children, and to provide support prior to, during, and following court cases, although it was acknowledged that, regrettably, some statements would be withdrawn.

81 Domestic Abuse and Victims and Commissioning Update

- In response to a question posed, the Panel was advised that the proportion of female to male officers within the Protecting Vulnerable People Section was circa 75%/25%.
- It was commented that education in schools around healthy relationships was essential, and the Panel was informed that an initiative called CRUSH was being delivered within West Mercia schools. CRUSH sought to help young people make safe healthy relationships and aimed to help young people to: avoid abusive relationships, exit abusive relationships safely and to help with any exposure to domestic abuse in the home environment.

DCI Pettit was thanked for the informative presentation and for outlining the challenges in tackling domestic abuse and the initiatives in place within West Mercia to support the victims of domestic abuse.

Andy Champness, the Chief Executive of the Office for the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, provided the Panel with a presentation on the Commissioner's commissioning framework and in particular outlined the developing commissioning process in relation to the provision of domestic abuse services.

A copy of the presentation given is attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The commissioning framework; assessed local needs, prioritised outcomes, sought to understand the existing and potential market place, procured products and services to achieve the outcomes, supported service providers to deliver outcomes, and was cyclical.

The Commissioner aimed to: continue to enhance the delivery of Domestic Abuse services, in line with wider victims by commissioning an end to end pathway, to co-commission or joint commission as appropriate to deliver value for money, to enhance share outcomes with local authorities, public health and clinical commissioning groups, and standardise specification whilst being aware of local need and difference.

The Panel thanked the Chief Executive for the presentation and requested that the item be considered further at a future Panel meeting.

The meeting ended at 16.40.

Chairman