

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
Wednesday, 15 September 2021, Council Chamber,
Wychavon District Council, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth
Drive, Pershore WR10 1PT - 11.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Cllr Aled Luckman (Chairman), Cllr Barry Durkin (Vice Chairman), Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Cllr Tom Wells, Cllr Nigel Lumby, Cllr Jeff Anderson, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Vivienne Parry, Cllr Jim Lavery, Cllr Richard Overton, Cllr Rob Adams and Cllr James Stanley

Also attended:

John Campion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Anthony Bangham, West Mercia Police
Tracey Onslow, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Gareth Boulton, Deputy Chief Executive

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 31 August 2021 (previously circulated).

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

395 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

On behalf of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, the Chairman thanked the Chief Constable, Anthony Bangham for his work with the Panel over the last five years.

396 Named Substitutes

None.

397 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Adam Kent (Bromsgrove District Council) and Graham Ballinger (Wyre Forest District Council).

398 Public

None.

Participation

399 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 August 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

400 Draft Police and Crime Plan 2021 - 2025

Before introducing the Draft Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) paid tribute to the current Chief Constable, Anthony Bangham on his last day of tenure as Chief Constable and for his 30 years' service for West Mercia Police. He thanked him for keeping the communities of West Mercia safe.

The PCC introduced the Report, highlighting that the Draft Police and Crime Plan went out for consultation on 9 August and that the Consultation would close 12 weeks later on 1 November.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- In response to a question about how the PCC ensured that consultations reached all of the communities of West Mercia, the PCC confirmed his strategic intention to represent all communities and for Police Officers also to be representative of the community, but acknowledged that there was always more that could be done to contact the harder to reach groups. The PCC welcomed suggestions for improvement.
- When asked about how dynamic West Mercia was, in its ability to adapt quickly to changes in types of crime, the PCC advised that the Plan set out his commitments clearly. He would ensure investments were maximised to enable Police Officers to be dynamic and succeed, but there would always be unforeseen challenges.
- It was suggested that it would have been helpful to include the performance framework in the Plan for complete clarity. The PCC advised that the Plan was prescribed in law and the format followed national best practice. It was a strategic document which set out the aspirations and the metrics would fall beneath the Plan. The PCC was confident that this was the best approach and had sufficient flexibility.
- When consulting the Parish Councils, the PCC confirmed that in addition to meeting with the various Parish Council Associations, he also met

**401 Her Majesty's
Inspectorate of
Constabulary
and Fire &
Rescue
Services**

with individual Parish Councils too.

- It was confirmed that the training of Police Officers followed the national College of Policing curriculum.
- A Member expressed a concern about the lack of visible policing on the streets. The PCC referred to the reassurance section of the Community Charter which set out clearly the measures of success for this area of policing. However, the PCC also acknowledged that the public perception regarding this was inconsistent and could be higher.
- A Member queried how the make-up of the West Mercia workforce represented the communities that it served. The PCC confirmed that there was a strategic intention for the workforce to represent the communities, however this would take time to achieve and the PCC would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for this.
- The Panel welcomed the PCC's commitment to empower community action by doubling the number of Community Speed Watch Groups in West Mercia.
- With regard to the PCC's commitment for West Mercia Police to be an organisation fit for the digital age, a Member suggested that whilst it was important to encourage Police Officers to increase their digital skills, wherever possible, this should be in the community (rather than office based) to ensure police visibility.
- In terms of the PCC's commitment to ensure effective regional and national oversight of counter-terrorism and other national collaborations, the PCC confirmed that he met with regional colleagues on a quarterly basis and the Chief Executive met with his counterparts more frequently.

In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, a report of the Panel would be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration.

The Panel considered Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Report issued on 23 June 2021 looking at how the Police had responded to the unique challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic placed on them in respect of preventing and responding to domestic abuse.

During the discussion, the following main points were

**(HMICFRS)
Review of
policing
domestic abuse
during the
pandemic**

made:

- A Member questioned the reason why the Inspectorate had found that many forces had fewer than usual reports of domestic abuse at the start of lockdown, but as time went on, reports returned to normal levels. By contrast, specialist domestic abuse services had seen very large increases in calls to their helplines and online platforms, such as webchats. Several helplines reported more requests for emotional support, worries about controlling behaviour and escalating experiences of violence and abuse. The PCC agreed that there were a number of unusual anomalies, to which he did not have answers.
- The Panel discussed how modern ways of Policing targeted the perpetrator through initiatives such as the Drive Programme.
- In order to break cyclical domestic abuse resulting from adverse childhood experience, it was important to have a whole system partnership approach to working with young people from an early age, for instance Telford and Wrekin Council had taken a partnership approach to tackle the issue from an early age.
- In response to a question about how Recommendation 3 of the Report (that all forces immediately reviewed their use of outcome 15, outcome 16 and evidence-led prosecutions) would be addressed, the PCC explained that all issues needed to be properly recorded and investigated in a timely way and it was important that victims believed that they would get justice when they had reported a crime (although court delays weren't helpful).
- A Member expressed concern about the delays and backlogs in the criminal justice system and the effect of this on victims of domestic abuse. Due to the challenges faced by the courts, it was noted that virtual remand hearing were not now taking place and hearings were now in the main taking place face to face. A Member suggested that the Chairman should write on behalf of the Panel to the Home Secretary to express the Panel's support for virtual remand hearings to help reduce the backlog of cases.
- A Member queried Table 1 (page 64 of the Agenda) - Changes in domestic abuse recording in England and Wales from March 2016 to March 2020 and whether the increases from 2017 were understood. The PCC explained that he wasn't

**402 Police & Crime
Plan Activity
and
Performance
Monitoring
Report (July -
August 2021)**

concerned that the numbers of cases were increasing as that reflected more accurate reporting, but was concerned about breaking the cycles of abuse and repeat offending.

- When asked if there were any hotspots on domestic abuse, the PCC advised that there were no hotspots, domestic abuse was a prolific offence that was everywhere.
- It was confirmed that reporting of domestic abuse was dealt with in the same as other 999 or 111 calls.

Members were asked to consider the Police and Crime Plan Performance Activity.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- It was noted that Warwickshire had indicated that continued ICT support would be required from West Mercia in order to ensure delivery of key policing services and functions beyond the end of the current collaboration agreement on 30 September 2021. Discussions regarding the scope and delivery of any necessary residual ICT services were ongoing. Any ICT services delivered by West Mercia beyond the end of the current collaboration would be on a hosted, not shared basis, as per the recommendation of the independent report at the close of the Alliance and would include a management fee.
- There had been an increase in Domestic Abuse Crime offences in the last quarter; the PCC confirmed that he was not yet reassured and would continue to focus and challenge in this area.
- The PCC confirmed that as reported at the July Panel meeting, funding had been received regionally for substance misuse diversionary services via £3.3 million seized through the Proceeds of Crime Act.
- It was noted that there would be a new Assistant PCC role which would be instead of the previous 5 part-time Community Ambassadors, interviews for which took place early September.
- The death of a serving West Mercia police officer and his young child in August was referred to. In response to a question about the availability of mental health services for staff, the PCC reassured Members that there were support systems in place but that there was always more that could be done.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Member referred to the recent system outage which had resulted in West Mercia Police being unable to accept 999 and 101 calls and relying on an external backup network. The PCC explained that it was a technical issue and that he was holding the Chief Constable to account and would continue to do so until he was reassured. He further explained that the back-up plans had worked and that there was also a contingency in place. • A Member queried whether the demography of the respondents to the Perception Survey could be shared with the Panel. The PCC agreed to send the Panel a link to the results of the Survey when it was published. |
| <p>403 Complaints 2020-21 Annual Report</p> | <p>The Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager introduced the report and it was noted.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager for her work in handling the complaints.</p> |
| <p>404 Work Programme</p> | <p>The Panel's Work Programme was discussed and it was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PCC would be asked to include detail around the structure of his Team in the next Performance and Activity Monitoring Report. • Any Members attending the 10th Annual PCP Conference would provide feedback to the Panel. • The Implementation of the Road Strategy (including road safety) and the contribution of the Police in planning applications in respect of road safety would be combined into one report about road safety report. |

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm

Chairman