

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Tuesday, 21 October 2014, 2.00 pm, Wyre Forest District
Council, Kidderminster

Minutes

Present:

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 Barry Durkin (Herefordshire)
Cllr Rae Evans (Telford and Wrekin)
Cllr Roger Evans (Shropshire)
Cllr Anne Hingley (Wyre Forest)
Cllr David Hughes (Malvern Hills)
Cllr Anthony Miller (Worcestershire)
Cllr Keith Roberts (Shropshire)
Cllr Margaret Sherrey (Bromsgrove)
Cllr Yvonne Smith (Redditch)
Col. Tony Ward OBE (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Cllr David Wilkinson (Worcester City)
Cllr Michael Wood (Shropshire)

Available papers

The members had before them:

**83 Welcome and
Introductions**

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel.
The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, including members of the public, new members of the Panel together with the Commissioner and his staff.

**84 Named
Substitutes**

Cllr Roger Evans (Shropshire) for Cllr Miles Kenny and Cllr Barry Durkin (Herefordshire) for Cllr Brian Wilcox.

**85 Apologies and
Declarations of
Interest**

Apologies were received from Cllr Miles Kenny – Shropshire (substituted by Cllr Roger Evans) and Cllr Brian Wilcox- Herefordshire (substituted by Cllr Barry Durkin).

Col Tony Ward advised the Panel that he had been appointed to serve on the Trust, integrity and Ethics Joint Committee which had been established by both the West

		Mercia and Warwickshire Commissioners. Having sought advice from the Panel's Monitoring Officer, Col Ward stated that there was no conflict of interest between his membership of the Police and Crime Panel and that of the Joint Committee.
86	Public Participation	None.
87	Confirmation of the minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel held on 23 July 2014	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2014 were agreed as a true record.</p> <p>The Panel Members were advised that a formal response had been submitted to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Police on the PEEL report from the Panel. The Chairman thanked Helen Barker for her work in leading the response.</p> <p>The Chairman advised the Panel that arrangements were being made for an initial meeting between him and the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel Chairman in advance of any wider meeting with both Commissioners and Chief Constables.</p>
88	West Mercia Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report	<p>The Panel was provided with an update on progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia (1 April 2014 – 31 March 2017), covering 1 July – 30 September 2014. The report outlined the progress on each of the 11 objectives listed in the Plan, provided an update on the grant scheme, reported on performance monitoring, and provided an outline of the Commissioner's key activities related to his performance role and functions.</p> <p>The Commissioner advised the Panel that there was a big agenda to be delivered within challenging times, both in terms of financial constraints and consequential changes in the police service. It was important that the needs of West Mercia residents and businesses were addressed and much work was being undertaken to deliver positive outcomes. Work was progressing to strengthen and deepen the alliance (STRADA) between West Mercia and Warwickshire Forces which was being taken forward by a project team and programme lead. A full and meaningful consultation exercise was to be carried out with staff to seek their views on future changes. The Alliance had a positive and rising national profile.</p>

Work was to take place around demand management and it was stated that policing would be very different in 5 – 10 years' time. The ICT strategy was integral to the work of the Force and to its engagement with communities. It was planned that the Force would be digitalised by the summer of 2016. Currently Bluelight Consultancy had been engaged to assist the Force with the delivery of the ICT strategy.

The new policing model had worked reasonably well; there remained some operational matters to be addressed, they would be actioned once analysis of the issues had been undertaken. The Panel was advised that 240 extra police officers would be recruited and be in place by December 2015.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- Were the 240 additional recruits in addition to the current establishments or replacements to fill in existing vacant posts? The Deputy Commissioner stated that during June/July 2014, the Force was around 100 police officers understrength. The 240 new recruits sought to both achieve the full establishment numbers and provide additional officers to easily and quickly fill posts which become vacant.
- Concerns were expressed regarding a situation in which it took two days to answer an emergency call. The Commissioner and his Deputy stated that they had been aware of the incident and that the response had been unacceptable. The Panel was provided assurance that the recruitment of police officers was well underway which would result in additional police presence within the area.
- The importance of a written report and police attendance at Annual Parish Council meetings were emphasised. The Deputy Commissioner advised the Panel that engagement with Parish Councils by local officers was encouraged and that the Commissioner supported officers' attendance at Parish Council meetings, as appropriate. During his tenure, the Commissioner had attended many parish council meetings and engaged with the County Associations. Requests for the Commissioner to attend parish council meetings would be considered. In recognising the time limitations of police officers, a Panel Member emphasised the fact that it was incumbent on parish councils and other local meetings to encourage attendance at which police officers were presenting information.

- How many cadets were then subsequently recruited as police officers? The Commissioner stated that the police cadets' initiative would continue during his term of office. Young people had the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence as cadets and, whilst there was not an automatic recruitment process from cadet to police officer, some cadets had successfully applied and been recruited into the regular force.
- Following on discussions from the last Panel meeting, local authorities would be keen to consider options in support of local policing models e.g public contact points, shared accommodation; and that, in order for any new initiative to be considered in light of other changes being implemented by the authority, such discussions needed to take place in a timely manner. The Commissioner stated that a further reconsideration of police accommodation would take place which could result in discussions around shared use. Active negotiations were taking place with the estates department. Consideration also needed to be given to making sure that new housing developments were appropriately served by the police. The Commissioner stated that he would be keen to engage with local authorities and that he was open minded to suggestions. The Commissioner's Office would set up meetings with interested local authorities to consider possible shared options and suggestions.
- As there was to be a consideration of demand management issues, the Panel requested that the Commissioner provide a report to the Panel, at an early stage, in order that the process and consequential impact could be discussed in public. The Commissioner stated that there would be a need to address many demand management issues and that he would be seeking a wide range of views through a consultation. The Commissioner advised the Panel that he would be keen to have early discussions with the Panel.
- In relation to Objective 5, and specifically the local approach to catching and convicting criminally active offenders, the a Panel Member drew to the Commissioner's attention a series of arson incidents which took place in Herefordshire over a 24 hour period during September 2014 and which, for a number of reasons, including systems errors, were not identified as a cluster and investigated appropriately in a timely manner. The Commissioner was asked what systems had been put in place to mitigate against such incidents in the future, to reduce both operator error and IT

failures, and what was the police policy on attending incidents? The Commissioner commented that the series of incidents did highlight some systems deficiencies and that these had now been addressed. The issue relating to call handling was unacceptable and that the effectiveness of the ICT systems would be considered as part of the wider ICT strategy being rolled out by the Force. The local commander had been made aware of the need to ensure early follow up of incidents and that all crime was being monitored on a daily basis. At the suggestion of the Panel Member, the Commissioner agreed to arrange for the local commander and the appropriate Panel Member to liaise to discuss the issues which had been identified.

- In relation to Objective 7, what was the latest position with the rolling out across the region of the multi-agency support hubs (MASH)? The Deputy Commissioner advised the Panel that it was the intention to establish MASH facilities across the region as soon as was possible. Currently Harm Assessment Units were in place and it was envisaged that MASH would replace these units in time.
- In relation to objective 9, what changes would be in place for West Mercia as a result of the single Road Safety Strategy? The Commissioner stated that speeding was of concern to communities across West Mercia. Community Speed Watch would provide communities with the opportunity to address the issue. It was acknowledged that it was not an easy problem to solve and that engineering solutions and education were both key aspects to tackle the problem. Equipment was also an important aspect of enforcement, however the Commissioner expressed concern as to the high cost of appropriate equipment. A panel member stated that there was lack of clarity around action available of speeding within enforceable and advisory limit areas. Additionally, the Commissioner's view was sought to address the fact that a primary school was located on a 60mph road. The Commissioner requested that he was given details of the school in order that he could co-ordinate with the safer roads partnership. Concern was expressed as to the cost of appropriate equipment, as without the proper equipment, enforcement action could be challenged. Motorcycles speeding and creating a noise nuisance was raised, and the Deputy Commissioner commented that he would look into the options available around average speed cameras.
- In respect of objective 10, was information available about the financial impact on communities of cyber-

crime? The Deputy Commissioner stated that the current annual cost to the economy was £30bn. A cross-alliance cyber-crime governance group had been established with had a broad membership (including police, business, academia, local authorities). Work would be undertaken to assess the scale of the cyber-crime profile and to develop action plans, but in the meantime, work would be undertaken to deliver the Government's cyber essentials in business accreditation for small and medium enterprises across the West Mercia and Warwickshire regions. Currently West Mercia received between 30-40 cases per month which were referred via the Action Fraud initiative – other areas e.g West Midlands Police and Metropolitan Police received hundreds and thousands of cases. Whilst investigation was core, prevention of cyber-crime was an important focus for the police's work. The Commissioner was reminded of the need to engage the Local Enterprise Partnerships, which would have an interest in cyber-crime.

- Assurance was sought, and provided by the Commissioner, that swift reimbursement was made to West Mercia following out of Force activity.
- Information was sought as to breakdown of penalties used in respect of shoplifting (e.g penalty notices) and what percentage of such disposals reverted back to the police as revenue. The Panel was advised that penalty notices were collected by the Tribunals Service, not by the police and whilst a small amount of the collected monies was allocated to the Ministry of Justice to set aside against victims' services, no monies were allocated back to policing. A commitment was given to provide the Panel with details relating to the proportion of disposals relating to shoplifting.
- A suggestion was made to the Commissioner about the presentation style of the narrative provided in the Performance Bulletin and the merits of including information in tabular form. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the presentation of such information would evolve and will soon include consideration of trends in a graph format.

RESOLVED that:

(a) the Panel notes the content of the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report;

(b) the following actions be noted:

89 Warwickshire and West Mercia Strategic Alliance - An independent review by the Police Foundation

- (i) The Commissioner's Office would set up meetings with interested local authorities to consider possible shared options and suggestions.**
- (ii) The Panel requested a report on demand management from the Commissioner at an early stage**
- (iii) That the Commissioner arrange for the local commander in Herefordshire and the Vice-Chairman of the Panel to meet to discuss the issues identified**
- (iv) the Deputy Commissioner to look into the options available around average speed cameras**
- (v) the Panel be provided with details relating to the proportion of disposals relating to shoplifting.**

The Panel considered the content of an independent review by the Police Foundation on the Warwickshire and West Mercia Strategic Alliance. The Chairman advised the Panel that he had been interviewed for the report and stated that his comments had been primarily included in paragraph 51 of the final report, and in which he had expressed his desire to engage West Mercia and Warwickshire Commissioners, Chief Constables and Panel Chairmen. Whilst the report was an academic paper in most part, it was a useful record of the establishment of the Alliance to date and summarised the on-going issues.

The Commissioner stated that he had good working relationships with the Warwickshire Commissioner, who had stated that there would not be a merger of both Forces during his term of office. Much had been achieved by the Alliance, and whilst there were some issues in the report about leadership structures, the status quo would remain for the immediate future.

In discussion Panel members made the following points:

- When considering the policing plan for 2015/16, would any issues identified in the report be reflected in the updated plan? The Deputy Commissioner stated that he hoped that there would be a move towards the development of a single policing plan. The report was useful in outlining for the development of the Alliance. He stated that West Mercia's Commissioner was open minded to the potential of single leadership, not least as cost savings could be made whilst retaining the seven local policing areas.
- How could the Community Ambassadors' roles be improved and made more effective? The Commissioner stated that the Community Ambassadors were undertaking their roles well, was

pleased with their activity and the way that they were getting to know their communities. The Commissioner stated that he was not able to recognise the comments expressed in the report about the Community Ambassadors. A meeting between the Commissioner and the Community Ambassadors was planned to be held soon. In response to a question, the Commissioner stated that whilst some the Community Ambassadors had met with their area's Community Safety Partnership, he would ensure that all ambassadors met their relevant CSPs. Whilst it was appreciated that information about the Community Ambassadors had already been circulated, the Commissioner was encouraged to frequently remind partners, such as local authorities and parish councils, who their Ambassador was and how to contact them.

- The Chairman stated that, at the appropriate time, he would extend an invitation to a community ambassador, the Chairman of the Trust, Integrity and Ethics Joint Committee and the Chairman of the Audit Committee to attend a future Panel meeting.
- A Panel member who was a former member of the Police Authority stated that both West Mercia and Warwickshire Police Authorities had worked closely and willingly together to establish the Alliance. There was a need to keep in mind the possible outcomes of the Parliamentary Elections in 2015 and its potential impact on a formal merger. The financial challenges for the Police, as for other public sector organisations, would deepen and it was imperative that a range of innovative solutions and options were considered in meeting these challenges.
- Responding to a question about the use of assets across West Mercia and Warwickshire, the Commissioner stated that the use of assets demonstrated the true spirit of the Alliance as resources were used in the areas where it was most needed. Credit was given to those who had the vision to create the Alliance and to those working constructively within it.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the report of the independent review by the Police Foundation on the Warwickshire and West Mercia Strategic Alliance.

90 Implementation of a Single Operating Model - One

The Panel considered a report which provided a broad overview of policing within West Mercia one year on from the implementation of the new policing model in September 2013. The Commissioner commented that the Home Secretary had recently used the Alliance as an

Year On

91 Domestic Abuse Commissioning Update

example of good practice on a national platform; the Alliance was ever strengthening and deepening.

Responding to a question about reconsideration of the police estate, the Deputy Commissioner stated that plans remained to reconsider the police estate but that no decisions had been reached as yet.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the content of the report.

Glyn Edwards, the Commissioning Manager in the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner provided an update presentation on the joint commissioning of Domestic Abuse provision. The presentation is attached as an appendix to the minutes.

During discussion, the following principal points were raised:

- Anyone could be a victim of domestic abuse and its impact could be felt by all within a family
- It was hoped that the initiative of jointly commissioning Domestic Abuse pathways across West Mercia would include all key stakeholder, including the court service
- It was confirmed that both Worcester Royal Hospital and the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital had Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs)
- It was stated that there was more domestic violence incidents occurring than being reported.
- There was a need to understand partners' shared outcomes and undertake effective joint commissioning whilst creating the right environment for successful approach. The risk of commissioning separately to different specifications was outlined.
- Joint commissioning would require strong leadership, governance and support to provide assurance in the process, together with strong support from both councillors and senior officers.
- It was acknowledged that the police and local authorities had excellent working relations and had achieved good outcomes on joint initiatives, however the current financial climate required consideration of different approaches, to avoid duplication and to focus on achieving shared outcomes. There was a need to consolidate and share insight. It was confirmed that

district councils were a key stakeholder working through the community safety partnerships.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the content of the presentation and be provided with an update on progress at a future meeting.

92 Proposed Work Programme 2014 - 2016

The Panel considered a report which outlined a proposed work plan to cover the period from October 2014 until March 2016 together with a schedule for the Panel to conduct the required scrutiny of progress made against the West Mercia Police and Crime Plan 2013 – 2017.

RESOLVED that the Panel:

(a) considers the content of the report and the proposed work plan; and

(b) agrees in principle the approach taken for the work programme (October 2014 – March 2016).

The meeting ended at 16.10.

Chairman