

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel**Tuesday, 9 December 2014, 2.00 pm, County Hall, Worcester****Minutes****Present:**

Cllr Paul Middleborough (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 Anne Hingley (Wyre Forest)
Cllr David Hughes (Malvern Hills)
Cllr Miles Kenny (Shropshire)
Cllr Tony Miller (Worcestershire)
Cllr Yvonne Smith (Redditch)
Colonel Tony Ward OBE (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)

Also attended:

Bill Longmore (West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner [PCC])
Barrie Sheldon (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner)
Andy Champness (Office of the PCC)
DCC Anthony Bangham (West Mercia Police)
Christopher Jensen (Office of the PCC)
Rob Phillips (Office of the PCC)
Tim Rice (Worcestershire County Council)
Sian Clark (Worcestershire County Council)

Available Papers:

The members had before them:

- A. The agenda papers (previously circulated)
- B. The minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel

93 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman warmly welcomed all in attendance to the meeting.

94 Named Substitutes

Cllr Barry Durkin (Herefordshire) for Cllr Brian Wilcox.

95 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from: Cllr Brian Wilcox (Herefordshire), Cllr Keith Roberts (Shropshire), Cllr Michael Wood (Shropshire), Cllr Rae Evans (Telford and Wrekin), Cllr Margaret Sherrey (Bromsgrove) and Cllr David Wilkinson (Worcester City).

96 Public

None.

Participation

97 Confirmation of minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel held on 21 October 2014

The minutes of the Panel meeting held on 21 October 2014 were agreed as a true record.

The Chairman advised the Panel that he had met with the Chairman of the Warwickshire Police and Crime Panel and that it was anticipated that a series of regular meetings would be established between the Panel Chairmen and Commissioners to consider issues relating to the strategic alliance. The Panel Chairmen would consider the merit of future closer working (e.g task groups) on a case by case basis.

98 West Mercia Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance

The Commissioner provided a verbal update on activity and performance relating to the West Mercia Police and Crime Plan.

The following points were highlighted in the Commissioner's update:

- the Commissioner was confident that work on the alliance would continue to deliver the savings required whilst also ensuring efficiencies within the service
- the Panel would receive a more detailed report on the work of the alliance at a future Panel meeting
- investing in the use of technology (spend to save) would underpin the efficient use of vehicles within the Force
- 60% of offenders were 'persistent'. There was a need to focus on prevention of crime and on the rehabilitation of offenders. The Commissioner would work closely with the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) e.g around training initiatives
- A grant of £1m would be provided to support victims
- A 'Showcase' was being planned for 2015, to be held in Shropshire, which would bring together elements relating to policing, victim support, community projects and sporting events.

In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- Responding to a question relating to the effectiveness of partnership working to deliver positive rehabilitation and training outcomes, the Commissioner stated that

he was confident in the approach being taken and would work closely with the new CRC. He additionally stated that the support of local communities was important to ensure integration of rehabilitated offenders

- What was the Commissioner doing with regard to the radicalisation agenda? In response it was stated that the Commissioner's office was working closely with the Community Safety Partnerships in addressing radicalisation. The Force was not complacent and it was imperative that the issue was tackled at source (at street level), though it was acknowledged that there was more to be done in this area. Close working with partners was being done to prevent radicalisation within West Mercia communities. Other areas that the Force was striving to better understand and tackle included cybercrime, historic sexual offences and modern slavery
- Responding to a question relating to the use and cost of vehicles (mileage, travel time of officers etc) and the relocation of officers, the Commissioner stated that he would highlight this operational issue with the Chief Constable
- Responding to a question about the effectiveness of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Hereford, the Commissioner advised the Panel that the MASH was working well and that the agencies involved were delivering positive outcomes. It was intended to roll-out the MASHs within the West Mercia area
- The Commissioner confirmed that there was nothing unexpected in the recently announced Autumn Statement relating to the Police Service
- Responding to a question relating to the Police Federation, the Panel was advised that the Chief Constable had met with representatives from the Federation. An update on the situation was requested to be provided to the Panel in due course.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the Commissioner's update on the West Mercia Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance.

99 Safer Roads Update

The Panel was provided with an update on the work being undertaken in support of the Police and Crime Plan objective to 'work with the Safer Roads Partnerships to reduce the number of casualties on our roads'.

The following points were highlighted to the Panel:

- Approximately 50 communities had shown interest in the Community Speedwatch initiative. Successful pilots had been held in Crowle (Worcestershire) and in Wigmore (Herefordshire) and it was anticipated that by late Spring 2015 a minimum of 10 schemes would be in operation with others to commence during the summer (subject to the availability of equipment)
- Road casualty data relating to road deaths, serious injuries and pedestrian casualties
- The impact to communities was not necessarily the speed, but the volume of traffic, which potentially caused difficulty in crossing the road.

In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- Why had the number of road deaths in Herefordshire increased substantially; were there contributory factors? The Panel was advised that there were no known explanations for the increase and there were no apparent correlations. The circumstances of each of the fatal incidents differed
- High speeding along rural lanes was a problem across rural areas. Whilst many parish councils had jointly funded illuminated signs, which had some impact, what opportunities were available for rural areas to access the Community Speedwatch initiative? In response it was stated that there was no bar; an application needed to be completed and an assessment made. It was acknowledged that speeding motorcycles were a problem in some areas, and specialist equipment to track motorcycle speed would be considered
- Inappropriate use by vehicles (especially lorries) of rural narrow roads was highlighted, and whilst it was stated that the use of appropriate mapping systems/ sat nav were not compulsory, static signage (indicating the inappropriateness of roads for certain vehicles) were becoming more common
- Had the reduction in the use of street lighting (zoning) had a consequential impact on accidents and crime? In response it was stated that there had

been research undertaken which stated that the zoning of street lighting had no effect on casualty rates on the number of incidents

- Responding to a question about road cycling, the Deputy Chief Constable stated that there was a need to adopt a safe cycling approach and for cyclist to stay within the law. It was important to target antisocial behaviour on roads, be it car, pedestrians, cycles etc
- Responding to a question about educating youngsters and young drivers about road safety, it was stated that and education workshops were held across the region, though it was not clear how the success of the scheme was assessed. It was requested that the next road safety report included information relating to the success of the various road safety schemes and initiatives currently in place across the area
- What was the Commissioner's view about enforcing the 20mph zone in '20's plenty' areas? In response it was stated that the 20mph was advisory and was not currently legally enforceable. Other considerations, such as road engineering, was important in regulating speed
- Was any specific work undertaken with schools, parents, students etc to make them more aware of road safety issues? In response it was stated that there was a joined up approach between the Police, Community Safety Partnerships, and the local authority highways and education service to consider a school's individual circumstances and to ensure appropriate solutions, e.g safe pick-up and drop-off points
- Did the police have the appropriate time and capacity to respond to relevant local planning consultations? The Deputy Chief Constable stated that the Police would ensure that time was given to responding to any safety concerns. An 'integrated community management' pilot scheme, which incorporated mixed agency teams to determine local priorities, was to be established. It was emphasised that the Police would enforce all laws where applicable. It was acknowledged that neither the Police nor the Commissioner received any contribution from the planning application fee

**100 Reducing Harm
Caused by
Drugs Activity
Update**

- In recognising the dangers of agricultural vehicles and the presence of mud on the roads, how could local authorities help identify problems, support remedies and assist with enforcement? In response it was stated that it was an offence to deposit mud on the road and that this was a problem across the region, which was taken seriously by the police and the law robustly enforced. Most farmers were very responsible and cleared up muddy roads on a daily basis. Signage was used extensively during the appropriate seasons and it was hoped that any problems were resolved swiftly by the neighbourhood policing teams. Local authorities could help by being additional 'eyes and ears' on the ground and informing the police of issues should they arise.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the Safer Roads Update report.

The Panel was provided with an update on the work being undertaken in support of the Police and Crime Plan objectives to reduce harm caused by drugs and alcohol namely; Objective 2 'to reduce the volume of violent crime with an emphasis on addressing the harm caused by alcohol through partnership working, and; Objective 3 'to reduce the harm caused by drugs with a focus on treatment, and targeting those that cause the most harm.

In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- How worried was the Commissioner about the harm caused by drugs and alcohol? The Commissioner stated that drugs had been identified as a problem early on and there had been a significant increase in arrests and large scale raids in recent times. It was acknowledged that whilst there had been a spike in the 12 month figures, the overall four year trend was decreasing. There had been a growing confidence by the public of reporting crimes such as domestic violence, race crimes and sexual crimes, which was positive in itself, but which contributed to the increased figures
- Was there a mechanism for those members of the public who reported potential crimes (such as drugs dealings) to be made aware, discreetly, of the outcome of the investigations? The Deputy Chief Constable stated that many of the operations carried out were visible in the local communities and that social media was also now widely used to report

policing activities, as well as reports in local papers. If the members of the public provided contact details, the police would, in most cases, report back

- Responding to a comment that multi-agency working was key to the prevention of crime and anti-social behaviour, the Commissioner emphasised the importance of working across agencies and sectoral interests to deliver solutions which were not necessarily about enforcement. The example of St Paul's Hostel was provided, where a 'wet room' was provided as a safe place for individuals to drink during the daytime so reducing the possible instances of anti-social behaviour and harassment
- It was commented that good work was being done by the Police in Herefordshire to divert 'pre-loading' i.e. where individuals consume alcohol at home prior to going out to pubs and clubs. This work supported the well-established 'Herefordshire Against Night Time Disorder' (HAND) initiative. Hereford had also benefited from a re-design and investment in the city centre which had impacted positively on the centre's use during the evenings. Concerns were expressed that the figures showed an increase in violent crime in parts of the region which needed to be addressed, but the Panel were assured that the long-term trend was a reduction in violent crime
- Responding to a question about Crimestoppers, the Panel was advised that the charitable organisation continued to be active. Leaflets and other information was available about Crimestoppers and the public could contact them in a variety of ways (www.crimestoppers-uk.org)
- Following reductions in the provision of youth services across the region, and given that prevention was a key priority for policing, was there any monitoring of crimes which resulted from the effects of drugs and/or alcohol on young people? It was stated that monitoring did take place and consequential impacts which were noted would need to be considered as part of the on-going discussions with local authorities. It was suggested that the concerns be raised at appropriate governance structures such as Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Partnerships
- Given that a rise in violent crime recorded was not necessarily due to alcohol, what was the reason for

the increases in Shropshire and North Worcestershire specifically? The Deputy Chief Constable stated that records for each area were analysed and links considered (e.g late Saturday nights into Sunday mornings). There was now a greater emphasis on ensuring the integrity of reporting statistics (e.g domestic abuse reporting), which in part contributed to the rise in recorded crimes

- Was there any pressure to consider the decriminalisation of drugs? In response it was stated that the Government's view was there was no case to decriminalise drugs.
- What was being done to prevent the take up of drug use and abuse of alcohol especially amongst young people? It was stated that 30 schools had Community Support Officers based within them. There were educational programmes and prevention initiatives, however it was important to question whether enough was being done to support young people who may be swayed by peer pressure. It was additionally stated that testing and treatment were also important. The restorative justice strategy was being developed and it was stated that community involvement could have an impact
- It was important that local authorities had robust licensing processes and policies and that good practice was pursued across the region's councils.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the update report.

101 Rural, Business and Cyber Crime Activity Update

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on the work being undertaken in support of the Police and Crime Plan objective to develop and implement a business crime strategy.

The following points were highlighted to the Panel:

- It was important to raise the confidence of residents as the fear of crime outweighed actual crime
- There was a need to encourage the reporting of all crime in order to gain a complete view of crime in the region; it was known that there was a lack of reporting of crime in the rural areas
- £1.5m (per annum for 5 years) had been allocated across the alliance area to support and facilitate

targeted activity to address rural, business and cyber-crime and governance structured underpinned the delivery of the strategies. A multi-agency and organisational approach was being adopted

- The police attendance policy in relation to rural crime considered a number of factors including; vulnerability of the person, premises, business etc; it was not an exact science. The Commissioner gave assurance that he was totally committed to rural communities and the provision of a good police service to these communities.

In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- It was important to acknowledge that crimes such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation were not exclusive to towns and cities. It was stated that child sexual exploitation was a priority for the Force and that protecting vulnerable individuals was key; extra resources had been made available to tackle such issues and the police were working closely with local authorities to identify vulnerable individuals. In addition, such crimes as cyber and modern slavery presented significant new challenges to policing
- Responding to a comment about communicating policing priorities with communities the Commissioner stated that he would be seeking to refresh his engagement strategy and would be holding open discussions with communities as part of the Showcase that was being planned
- Responding to a comment, it was stated that the police had a strategy to review the automatic number plates system
- Positive comments were made about the visibility of police cars and police officers, especially in rural communities; however, would it be possible for consideration to be given to parked police cars to be located at known speeding areas, thus being a deterrent to speeding drivers?

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the update report.

102 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the following as future meeting dates:

All to commence at 2.00p.m

- 4 February 2015 – Worcestershire County Council
- (17 February 2015 – to be used only if necessary)
- 21 July 2015
- 20 October 2015
- 8 December 2015
- 2 February 2016
- (16 February 2016 – to be used only if necessary)

The meeting ended at

Chairman