

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Tuesday, 21 July 2015, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

Minutes

Present:

Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Cllr Brian Wilcox (Vice Chairman), Cllr Charlotte Barnes, Cllr Michael Wood, Cllr Stephen Reynolds, Cllr Hilda Rhodes, Cllr A P Miller, Cllr Margaret Sherrey, Mr P Grove, Cllr Yvonne Smith, Cllr A C Roberts, Cllr Paul Middlebrough (Chairman), Cllr Helen Barker, Colonel Tony Ward OBE and Cllr A T Hingley

Also attended:

Bill Longmore, Police and Crime Commissioner
Barrie Sheldon, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
David Shaw, Chief Constable, West Mercia Police
Rob Phillips, Office of the PCC
Gareth Boulton, Office of the PCC
Glyn Edwards, Office of the PCC

Suzanne O'Leary (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager)

Available Papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The agenda papers (previously circulated)
- B. A copy of the presentation slides for Item 12 (circulated at the meeting)
- C. A copy of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's Community Engagement Strategy 2014-16 (circulated at the meeting)
- D. The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel

A copy of documents A - C will be attached to the signed minutes.

111 Welcome and Introductions (Agenda Item 1)

Cllr Middlebrough welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular the new members of the Panel. Agenda Item 6 would be taken before Item 4.

112 Named Substitutes (Agenda Item 2)

Cllr Hilda Rhodes for Cllr Rae Evans and Cllr Anne Hingley for Cllr Sally Chambers.

113 Apologies and

Apologies had been received from Cllr Keith Roberts

Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 3)	(Shropshire) and Cllr Pauline Dee (Shropshire).
114 Appointment of co-opted elected members (Agenda Item 6)	Colonel Ward declared an interest as a member of the Trust, Integrity and Ethics Committee, Mrs Barker declared an interest as a trustee of Youth Support Services (YSS) and Cllr Grove declared an interest as a retired police officer in receipt of a pension. The following elected members were unanimously co-opted on to the Panel: Cllr Michael Wood, Cllr Charlotte Barnes, Cllr Pauline Dee, Cllr Sebastian Bowen and Cllr Rae Evans.
115 Election of Chairman (Agenda Item 4)	Cllr Middlebrough was standing down following his term of office as Chairman. Cllr Brian Wilcox was proposed and seconded as Chairman. There were no other nominees. Cllr Brian Wilcox was duly elected Chairman of the Panel until July 2018 and took the chair.
116 Appointment of Vice-Chairman (Agenda Item 5)	There was now a vacancy for Vice-Chairman. Cllr Tony Miller was proposed and seconded as Vice-Chairman. There were no other nominees. Cllr Miller was appointed as Vice-Chairman until July 2018.
117 Public Participation (Agenda Item 7)	None.
118 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting (Agenda Item 8)	Cllr Smith noted that she had given apologies to the last meeting which were not recorded. With this change, the minutes of the Panel meeting held on 2 February 2015 were agreed as a true record.
119 Draft Annual Report Of The Police And Crime Commissioner For West Mercia (Agenda Item 9)	The draft Annual Report for 2014/15 was presented for the Panel's consideration. In accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Panel was required to review the Report and to make any recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration. The Report provided a high-level overview of the PCC's work over the last financial year and had been produced to be

accessible and meaningful to a number of different audiences.

The Commissioner, in presenting the Annual Report, highlighted the following points to the Panel:

- A constructive working relationship had developed between the Panel and the Commissioner and his office. This open and honest relationship would enable progress to be made and helped the Commissioner carry out his role. The Commissioner was proud of all the relationships that had been built up since his election and emphasised that his aim was to improve things for residents.
- The Report demonstrated the scale of what had already been addressed to make West Mercia a safer place to live, although there was still more to be done; there were a number of new initiatives and commissioning would become increasingly important.
- He noted the problems faced by the Prison Service. Rehabilitation of offenders was costing £13bn p.a. nationally, almost 100% of under 18 year olds re-offended and there was a spiral of offending. He had therefore built up relationships with the Prison Service, for example enabling the Mayor of Whitchurch to visit the prison. He had also developed Inside Products – a company which sold products made within prison to bring in income for the prisons. West Mercia was ahead of other areas with a lot going on.
- The key was to prevent crime in the first place, to reduce the demand for police and justice services; he was therefore investing in prevention.

In the ensuing discussion the following main points were made:

- There was concern about the rise in sexual offences, with a 75% increase in reported rapes. There were three elements to this: a large percentage were historical crimes that were only now being reported due to the publicity created by the Savile case; victims of recent crimes were also becoming more confident in coming forward to report the crime; and there was likely to have also been an increase in sexual offences. In addition,

crime data was being tidied up following HMIC's review of the integrity of crime-recording, whereby crimes were being recoded this year which had occurred last year. Sexual offences remained the Force's major concern as there had been a dramatic and troubling rise; investment was being made in this area. The definition of rape had changed – it now included rape in marriage and male rape, though this would only be having a small impact on the overall figures. There had been societal changes and there was much more internet enabled crime.

- In relation to complaints against police officers, the Panel asked how many of those complaints were substantiated and what was the cost of dealing with complaints. The Commissioner noted that he would be concerned if a lot of money was wasted on examining frivolous, unsubstantiated complaints against officers, but there was a legal requirement to investigate every complaint. The new independent Trust, Integrity and Ethics Committee held the Chief Constable to account on the police's use of their powers, such as use of force and stop and search. Its agenda was not set by the Chief Constable and it was a very beneficial initiative. It was noted that complaints turnaround was not as fast as it could be and acknowledged that the police standards department had been under resourced recently in relation to lower order complaints, as other areas were prioritised; new investment was now going into this area. Although unsubstantiated complaints were frustrating, complaints were a good way of ensuring that the police were doing a good job. The overall trend was downwards but it was essential that complaints should not be suppressed in order to keep the numbers low. Complaints data should be looked at in the round alongside confidence and satisfaction data. More in depth analysis of complaints could be provided if required.
- Members asked about the increase in reserves from £53.1m to £63.9m, one member felt this justified his opposition to the 1.99% increase in the precept and asked whether there were project slippages which had caused the increase. The Commissioner explained that a lot of the funds were already committed and would be invested to make West Mercia safer place, prevent crime and

invest in rehabilitation. There were IT spend to save schemes which took time to implement. The reserves had built up as a result of the Alliance with Warwickshire Police; efficiencies had been implemented and recruitment stopped temporarily – 100 staff had left in one year and not all had been replaced immediately. In addition, a reduction in central government grant of 3.2% over the next five years was anticipated and the Police needed to be prepared for this.

- Members asked about the strategy in relation to gypsy and traveller communities and whether there was a role for the Community Ambassadors. The Police welcomed the support they received from councillors to resolve problems; the legislation was not very robust in this area although the Police used all the powers they could. It was vital for the police and others to be properly trained and to understand the traveller community. A recurring issue was the number of sites, the political complexities of increasing the provision were acknowledged, but increased provision was part of the solution and needed to be addressed. The Panel stressed the importance of the police being involved in the early stages of the development of councils' local plans in creating good facilities for travellers and gypsies in the right locations.
- In relation to the causes of the 4.8% increase in crime since 2013/14, it was recognised that any increase was not welcome, but it was not a huge rise and was not unique to West Mercia. As the general reduction in crime across the developed world could not all be attributed to policing, neither could all increases in crime; there were other factors in play. The Chief Constable highlighted shoplifting in particular as an area where the punishments and risks were relatively small. He anticipated a continuing rise in sexual violence as more victims felt confident in reporting the crime.
- The public's confidence in West Mercia Police was high, although below the national average, and victim satisfaction was over 85%. This did not mean the Police were complacent, the 15% who were dissatisfied could be the most vulnerable and the Police worked hard to understand their experience.

- The issue of mental health support for young people and adults was discussed. There was a mental health crisis concordat board in place involving a wide range of partners, which had been looking at triage arrangements and solutions to taking people with mental health problems into the custody suite. There had been a seismic shift in the way people in a mental health emergency were looked after. The number of adults with mental health problems being taken into custody suites had fallen to single figures and there were no children or young people being taken to custody blocks. This was thanks to a lot of work by NHS colleagues. Some work still needed to be done on police officers accompanying people to A&E, where they may have to wait hours to transfer to medical staff, discussions were taking place on how to convey patients to A&E. It was not always best to involve the police when someone with mental health problems was violent in a health setting and this was also being looked at. This area was moving in the right direction and the PCC had been instrumental in this. The police would call a doctor to assess someone if they had concerns in the custody suite about the person's mental health. There was also access to psychiatric staff. They had looked at having a mental health nurse on duty in police cars, but there were not enough incidents to justify this.
- Members asked about the return on investment and what the measurable outputs were. The overall aim was to reduce crime, reduce harm and reduce the number of victims. There was a strategic commissioning framework being developed which would initially aim to understand the profile of crime and then what services were in place to reduce them. The Strategy would also set out what outcomes were trying to be achieved. It was important that all community safety partnerships were working to the same outcomes - the Police and Crime Plan contained 11 objectives that all were trying to achieve. It was important to get value for money outcomes from the investment.
- The Panel asked about the progress being made on discussions with local authorities about youth services. It was vital to engage young people to help prevent them from taking up crime and the impact of any budget reductions by local

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authorities needed to be closely monitored. Members suggested that detailed discussions could be started as most councils would already be aware of the reductions they were likely to make.

- Community Speed Watch was a positive initiative that had been successful. It would be rolled out as resourcing allowed.
- In relation to the Rural Crime and Business Crime Strategies – it was noted that shoplifting had increased and that some rural businesses were being forced to become online only. The Commissioner was working in partnership with the federation of Small Businesses on this and needed to ensure that all shoplifting was reported. Shops also had some responsibility to help design out crime. The impact of funding reductions was starting to be felt with fewer resources available for village centres. There was a balance to be struck when prioritising resources in relation to harm caused.

The Panel considered a proposed variation to the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia, in accordance with the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The report set out the proposal to vary the plan to reflect changes to the Strategic Policing Requirement which now includes child sexual abuse as an additional national threat; and provide a more up to date picture of activity and actions required against each objective, in part to reflect changing policing demands.

In the ensuing discussion the following main points were made:

- In relation to reducing the number of casualties on the roads – members welcomed the review of governance of the Safer Roads Partnerships as there was a perception that they were speed focussed and not genuine partnerships. It was suggested that highway engineering was a missing element in the functions of the partnerships and that the police should have a chance to participate in highways issues, working with the highways authorities.
- Members asked about the reduction in the number of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs),

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when there had been a pledge to increase the number. The Commissioner explained that the Police had originally wanted to cut the number of PCSOs by 100 and he had managed to keep 49 of these, rather than the aim being to increase the number. Recruitment was ongoing to maintain a minimum of 235 PCSOs; the 233 figure in the Plan was an unexplained blip.

- Members asked for more information on the number of PACTs that were operational. This would be circulated.

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2017 which covered the time period 1 October - 31 January 2015. The report set out progress on the objectives, an update on performance by exception and a brief outline of the PCC's key activity.

In the discussion the following main points were raised:

- Members asked whether any profits from the scheme for prisons to produce and sell goods would be invested to reduce re-offending or to refurbish housing for prisoners once they were released. It was clarified that this scheme was in its early days, though the potential was tremendous, and the company would have a Board which would determine how any income was spent
- The Panel asked for a breakdown of the outcomes from the 550,000 recorded crimes in 2014/15 that had an outcome. The definition of "positive" outcome was set by the Home Office.
- The Panel asked what progress was being made on tackling drug and substance misuse and whether there were good outcomes from treatment. The Commissioner was very concerned about this area, it was clear that many with mental health problems also had substance misuse problems and limited treatment services were available. There was also a substance misuse problem within prisons and it was a very difficult and dangerous situation, with increasing amounts of dangerous drugs available. The Commissioner had invested £265,000 in the last

122 Community Engagement Strategy (Agenda Item 12)

twelve months in treatment services – match funding local authorities - and was trying to achieve similar outcomes to council and NHS partners. The PCC was keen to work more closely with partners and potentially pool budgets to achieve these outcomes. It was noted that education also had a big role to play. The PCC was investing in testing people coming in to police custody and referred them to treatment services as appropriate, but there was some concern about the outcomes from those services which Worcestershire County Council was looking in to. Members felt that this area needed a higher profile and was possibly something for the Panel to consider at a future meeting. The Commissioner was concerned there were too many people with substance misuse problems. In relation to 'legal highs' the Government was intending to introduce legislation, which would help the Police and give them more tools to tackle this problem.

- It was confirmed that Warwickshire Police did not subscribe to the Central Motorway Patrol Group. A review was underway of strategic roads policing, outcomes would be reported to the Commissioner in six weeks or so.
- The Force was monitored on its contribution to the Strategic Policing Requirement and was well placed in this.

The Panel received a presentation from Gareth Boulton, the Commissioner's Head of Communications, on the Commissioner's Community Engagement Strategy 2014-16, which had recently been revised following consultation and set out the Commissioner's statutory duties in this area.

The presentation gave an overview of how the Commissioner was meeting his vision for a new community spirit via the Police and Crime Plan objective to provide a strong and powerful voice for people and victims of crime and highlighted developments made in:

- the organisational structure to support engagement
- how achievement against the strategy was monitored and scrutinised
- communication with residents via correspondence, social media and public events

123 **Dates of future meetings**

The presentation focused on the role of the Commissioner's Community Ambassadors. There were five Ambassadors spread geographically around the area, with support from a co-ordinator and a communications officer. They acted as the eyes and ears of the Commissioner, both feeding back issues to the Commissioner and finding out how strategies were working on the ground and monitoring the effectiveness and results of the grants the Commissioner was providing. This was especially important in West Mercia which was geographically the fourth largest police force area. The Ambassadors were: Gwyneth Gill, who covered Herefordshire; Mike Layton, North Worcestershire; Graham Oliver, Shropshire; Richard Morris, South Worcestershire; and Sajid Younis, Telford and Wrekin.

There had recently been a Showcase event in Shrewsbury, involving 60 partner organisations and focusing on crime prevention. The event had been well attended and feedback was positive.

The aim of the Commissioner's publicity was to engage the community and show the police in a positive light, which was different to the publicity the police carried out.

The Panel was impressed by the organisation of the Showcase and complimented the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner on the way they got out and about around the area.

The dates of future meetings were:

- 20 October 2015
- 8 December 2015
- 2 February 2016
- (16 February 2016 – to be used only if necessary)

One member asked whether all meetings should be held in Worcester, but as the Panel had previously agreed to rotate around the area the Chairman proposed that this be discussed at a future meeting. The next meeting would be in Shire Hall, Hereford.

The meeting ended at 4.20 pm

Chairman