

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Tuesday, 2 February 2016,

Minutes

Present:

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

Also attended:

Bill Longmore, Barrie Sheldon, David Shaw, Andy Champness, Elizabeth Hall, Rob Phillips, Jodie Townsend, Timothy Rice and Kate Griffiths

144 Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies had been received from Pauline Dee, Keith Reynolds and Michael Wood.

The Chairman welcomed Jodie Townsend who was the Interim Democratic Services and Governance Manager at Worcestershire County Council.

145 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were declared by Phil Grove who was in receipt of a West Mercia Police pension. He had sought legal advice and had been assured that he was able to remain in the room for the discussion and vote regarding the budget.

Sally Chambers declared a DPI as her brother would be standing as a candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner.

Tony Ward was a member of the Trust, Integrity and Ethics Committee and Helen Barker was a member of the Youth Support Service.

146 Public Participation

None

147 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

A query was made as to why some members were listed as Mr while most were called Councillor. It was explained that County Councillors were traditionally called Mr rather than Councillor.

The minutes were accepted as a correct record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

148 **Consideration
of the Proposed
Precept**

Elizabeth Hall gave a presentation regarding the 2016/17 budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Plan.

The achievements and financial position of the last four years were outlined and it was explained that the current grant settlement was for one year only with a further Formula Funding Review to occur in 2016/17 which was likely to mean increased top-slicing in 2017/18.

During 2016/17:

- financial pressures were present due to the 1% pay award, an increase in NI and cost increases connected to employment benefits,
- new investment would be made in recruitment and training,
- £31.8 million of Capital investment would occur across the Alliance,
- £9.1million of reserves would be required - £4.7m to support the budget and £4.4m for Rural, Business and Cyber Crime,
- Savings of £6.5m were already in place,
- An increase of 1.99% in the precept would raise £1.5m for West Mercia.

2017/18 and beyond – The Medium Term Financial Plan:

- The Alliance had a savings target of £8.726m
- The total capital programme for the Alliance was £87.585m, which included using £19.5m of reserves
- West Mercia reserves would have an opening balance of £57.503m and a closing balance of £27.563.

During the consultation on the proposed precept 317 responses were received. 57% said yes, 40% no, with 3% unclear. This was a small number of respondents but it was highlighted that even the people who said no appreciated the work of the front line police.

Paul Middlebrough had Chaired the Task and Finish Group which looked at the proposed budget. He thanked the two other members of the group as well as Adrian Blackshaw from the Police Audit Committee and Mark Sanders from the County Council's finance department for assisting them.

It was pointed out that it was a strange settlement as a large reduction had been expected and then at the last moment that did not happen. The Police Minister, supported by the Home Secretary had stated that for

2016/17 "direct resource funding for each PCC, including precept will be protected at flat cash levels, assuming that precept income is increased to the maximum amount available. This means no PCC will face a reduction in cash funding next year compared to this year, and the majority will see marginal increases in funding".

As the settlement was only for one year a change was likely for the following year and this budget looked for flexibility for the new PCC with strong reserves and investment in revenue expenditure. It was recognised that efficiencies needed to be made and certain areas of expenditure were outside the control of West Mercia such as the nationally negotiated police pay. The Panel's Precept task and finish group had considered what the impact would be if the precept was not increased by 1.99%.

Cllr Middlebrough also pointed out that the police grant per head of population in West Mercia was £104 per person while West Midlands got £156.

During the discussion the following main points were made:

- The number of respondents to the consultation may be too small to be statistically relevant,
- A Panel Member felt that as the reserves were 3 times greater than they needed to be and with the grant reduction being £630,000 it was a bit much to ask for £1.5 million increase from tax payers. They hoped the rationale for increasing the precept was not just because the Home Secretary said they could. They were reassured that that was not the case – there were a large number of unknowns and the present position would not be sustainable without further funding and savings. The reserves would be used to meet future top slicing and to invest in ICT and the estate without having to borrow. They also acknowledged that there was public concern for public safety and maintaining police numbers,
- Councillor Middlebrough assured the Panel that the Task and Finish Group had looked at the capital investment and felt that it would help the alliance with Warwickshire. They had also had discussions on whether it was better to borrow or use reserves. They felt the proposal would leave as much flexibility as possible for the new PCC,
- The PCC told the Panel that he challenged his staff to convince him that a rise was the right thing to do, which they had,
- A panel member wanted reassurance that the

large investment on new IT systems would be worthwhile and successful. Andy Champness (Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner) agreed there was significant investment in IT but it was necessary and all the systems had been tried and tested elsewhere. New hardware was needed as well as new software.

- The panel were reassured that the new ESN radio system was a national system which was being brought in for all the emergency services and it would work with the new IT system,
- It was clarified that the Bear Scotland agreement meant that holiday and sickness pay had to take bonus' and overtime into account,
- The potential of raising income from providing training for other services had been considered but there was not the capacity to offer training to other services at present,
- When asked 'what will the 1.99% pay for?', the PCC replied that West Mercia were the top force for increasing staff numbers in the last 12 months. 1.99% would protect the front line and pay to keep 40 officers,
- A Panel member was concerned that the budget was not self-sustaining in the long term and wondered whether further Alliances were being considered. The PCC responded that they were continually looking for ways to work more efficiently with neighbouring authorities but a further alliance was not imminent. The Chief Constable pointed out that collaboration with other bodies and blue light services were moving ahead and also working with Local Authorities for example with Worcestershire County Council with the Place Partnership,

Paul Middlebrough proposed that the increase should be supported by the Panel and was seconded by Sebastian Bowen. He also hoped the panel would support the incoming PCC and Chief Constable in any negotiations to get fairer funding for West Mercia.

The proposal was put to the vote:

In favour – 11

Against – 2

Abstain – 1

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel accept the precept proposed by the Police and Crime Commissioner and issue a report to that effect.

Andy Champness explained that the latest quarterly figures were presented in the report in the agenda. Since the report had been written an update from the Crime Survey for England and Wales stated confidence in the police in West Mercia had increased to 79% - the average for England and Wales was 77%.

- The panel queried why the summary stated there was 'no significant change' in areas such as sexual offences and business and rural crime when the graphs suggested these had increased. It was explained that the summary showed there was no significant change to the trend, which was increasing,
- There was concern that there were no figures to support the statement that there had been 'no change' to the number of crimes. The Office of the PCC noted that it was a helpful observation and they would alter the report for the next meeting. The Chief Constable stated that they were aware that 'no change' does not mean that everything was ok and work was still needed in those areas,
- The Chief Constable clarified a query regarding response times – new resources had been moved to Leominster but it had been recognised that too many had been moved and as a result some had been moved back to Tenbury. He also stated that there was more to response times than time and the way the call was dealt with and followed up was also important,
- The Chairman summarised that it would be helpful to have the performance report presented in a different way – perhaps with a traffic light system. Members were asked to feed any further changes to Jodie Townsend. Andy Champness replied that the new PCC would have a new plan so that would be a good time to consider the presentation of the figures,
- Traditionally sexual offences had been under reported so an increase in the number of crimes being reported was a good thing and showed the police were increasingly empathetic,
- There were queries that the figures showed that burglaries had increased while at the same time it was generally believed they were decreasing. The Chief Constable clarified that burglaries were increasing across the country and if Councillors wanted more specific information regarding their areas they could speak to their local police

Commander,

- The Chief Constable explained that the increase in crime numbers had been caused partly because of a new way of reporting crime – that it was recorded when it was reported regardless of whether the evidence supported the claim; and also historical crimes being reported due to the effect of high profile cases. This was now settling down and reports were close to a steady state,
- A panel member asked if the numbers of hate crimes could be broken down by age and location and how they were reported. The Deputy PCC explained that a commissioning exercise was being carried out with community safety partnerships and projects were being undertaken with different groups. Also the police were visiting all village halls within West Mercia so would be more available in rural areas,
- It was pointed out that the increase in numbers of rape and sexual attacks being reported was very scary for members of the public and the PCCs office was asked to break down the figures per capita, as this would be more meaningful locally.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel noted the Performance report for October to December 2015 and requested that a new approach be developed in regards to how performance information was reported to the Panel by the PCC.

150 Police and Crime Plan

The Chairman explained that the Task and Finish Group which had been set up to consider the Police and Crime Plan had not managed to meet and Cllr Wood who was due to be Chairman of the Group needed to stand down from that position. It was therefore suggested that this item be postponed until the next meeting and discussions could take place with the new PCC about how the new plan would be scrutinised.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel postpone the discussion regarding its role in relation to the Police and Crime Plan, until the meeting on 6 July 2016.

151 Consultation on Proposal for Police and Crime Commissioners

The Government had launched a consultation regarding the complaints process for Police and Crime Panels seeking to resolve complaints made against a Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Chairman suggested that the Ombudsman system was used in other areas such as for Local Government

Complaints

and he considered that the same system could be used for complaints against a PCC.

A comment was made that although this was a reasonable suggestion, it could become expensive to a Police and Crime Panel if they had to deal with lengthy investigations or even judicial reviews. In such cases members would have to ask individual authorities for funding. If the Government wished to pass the liability to Police and Crime Panels then they should underwrite the funding.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel's response to the Consultation should be to suggest that the Ombudsman system be extended to cover the PCC as long as it were properly resourced by Government.

152 PCC End of Term Report

The Police and Crime Commissioner presented his End of Term Report. He and his Deputy had had a vision for policing and they had slowly managed to bring about change. They recognised that they needed to either expand or reduce demand for police services and a major part of this process was successfully working with partners. He hoped that the new PCC would be able to continue with that work.

The aim to achieve safer, happier communities had been difficult in a time of decreasing resources but West Mercia was one of the safest places in the country with efficient and effective services. There were now 74 more officers and training was continuous.

He was a strong believer in youth activities and encouraging people to take an active part in their communities. He felt prevention should be a priority and had given the Divisional Commanders £30,000 towards prevention projects. This had resulted in less demand on police and probation services. He also invested in Integrated Offender management which kept an eye on offenders when they were released from prison.

He felt he had created a good way forward and hoped the new PCC would be able to continue the good work.

The Chairman thanked the PCC for his report. He felt that 'Community' had been a strong message from the PCC and appreciated that he had travelled around the whole area, along with help from the Deputy PCC.

The Vice Chairman mentioned that he had attended an awards evening which was held at Hindlip which

**153 Towards 2020 -
Building an
Alliance for the
Future**

recognised the work the PCC had done with communities and he appreciated that awards were presented to members of the public and not just police.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel thank the Police and Crime Commissioner for his report and passed on their best wishes.

The Chief Constable David Shaw gave a presentation regarding the future of the Alliance. He explained that he was proud of being part of West Mercia and he wanted to provide a vision for the future that provided even better protection for local people.

This plan was similar to the one that would have been presented in December but now they knew they had greater resources than expected. Their mission continued to be protecting people from harm with a growing emphasis around prevention. This model needed a more responsive model of policing which involved working with partners.

One of the main strengths in West Mercia was that it was based on strong local policing and the police worked well with Leaders, Councillors and Officers of Local Authorities. They would put in place the most effective policing for each of the local communities and would work to put officers where they were needed most. If necessary they would refer people to partner organisations and make use of volunteers and special constables.

It was recognised that the staff were the cornerstone of the organisation and they needed to be equipped with the latest technology and training. They would work hard to integrate services and information and work towards shared outcomes with partners. Investment was important to make the necessary transformation for current and future generations.

Transformational change was necessary and the way they worked would be revisited, challenged and re-designed. The market would be engaged and a transformation partner would be appointed to design and deliver the transformation. West Midlands had already gone through that process but West Mercia needed its own model. This transformation would continue once the new PCC had been appointed.

The Panel recognised that that this was an important presentation and it was suggested that there be a seminar session before the next meeting. The Chairman

agreed that they needed to wait for the new PCC, to see how the plan would be enacted.

RESOLVED that the Chief Constable be thanked for his presentation and the Chairman, Andy Champness and the Chief Constable would consider how best to arrange further training.

154 Dates of Future meetings

The Chairman noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 6 July 2016 at County Hall, Worcester.

Future meetings

- Wednesday 5 October 2016
- Wednesday 7 December 2016
- Wednesday 8 February 2017

The meeting ended at 4.06pm

Chairman