

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
Tuesday, 4 February 2014
County Hall, Worcester.

Minutes

Panel Members 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 Roger Berry (Worcester City)
Cllr Rebecca Blake (Redditch)
Cllr Sebastian Bowen (Herefordshire)
Cllr Rae Evans (Telford and Wrekin)
Cllr Ian Hardiman (Wyre Forest)
Cllr Roger Hollingworth (Bromsgrove)
Cllr David Hughes (Malvern Hills)
Cllr Miles Kenny (Shropshire)
Cllr Anthony Miller (Worcestershire)
Col. Tony Ward OBE (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Cllr Brian Wilcox (Herefordshire)
Cllr Michael Wood (Shropshire)

Available papers:

The members had before them (previously circulated):
A. The Agenda papers;
B. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 December 2013

61. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman warmly welcomed Panel members to the meeting. He advised the Panel that Bill Longmore, the Police and Crime Commissioner, was not present as he was recovering from recent surgery and whilst he was actively working from home he was heeding medical advice to avoid public contact. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, Barrie Sheldon, the Chief Constable, David Shaw and their supporting officers were also welcomed to the meeting.

The Chairman paid tribute David Brierley, the Chief Executive to the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (and previously Chief Executive to the West Mercia Police Authority), who would soon be retiring. David's professionalism together with the advice and guidance provided during his tenure of office was appreciated and commended.

62. Named Substitutes

Cllr Roger Berry on behalf of Cllr Lynn Denham.

63. Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllr Lynn Denham (Worcester City) and Cllr Keith Roberts (Shropshire).

Mrs Helen Barker declared an interest as a Trustee of YSS Ltd, an organisation which supported the rehabilitation of offenders.

Cllr Rebecca Blake declared an interest in agenda item 5 and did not vote on this item.

64. Public Participation

None.

65. Confirmation of Minutes (agenda item 4)

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 10 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to amending the typographical error on page 4.

66. Consideration of the Proposed Precept (agenda item 5)

The Panel considered the Commissioner's proposal for the setting of a proposed precept for the financial year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

The Commissioner was required to present a proposed precept to the Police and Crime Panel by no later than 1 February 2014 and was required to act in conformity with the Police & Crime Panels (Precept and Chief Constable Appointments) Regulations 2012. The Commissioner was required to have regard to the report of the Police and Crime Panel.

The final precept had to be determined by 1 March 2014.

The Panel considered a detailed report provided by the Commissioner which outlined the net budget requirements for 2014/15; the proposed precept for 2014/15; the proposed medium term financial plan; and the outline capital programme. The Commissioner was recommended to set a proposed precept increase of 1.99% for 2014/15 provided that such an amount did not trigger a referendum requirement under the Localism Act 2011 in which event the precept was proposed to be set as close as possible to a 1.99% increase as was permissible without triggering a referendum requirement.

The Chairman reminded the Panel that following consideration of the proposed precept the Panel had three options; to support the proposed precept with or without qualification, comment or recommendation; not support the proposed precept and may comment or make recommendations, including as to the level of the precept; or to veto the proposed precept and indicate whether the veto was because the proposed precept was too high or too low, together with any recommendations.

The Commissioner, in determining his budget proposals,

had given regard to the:

- national targets and objectives (including the Strategic Policing Requirements)
- priorities within the Police and Crime Plan and any likely changes to them
- outcome of the public consultation
- plans and priorities of partner organisations relating to community safety and crime reduction
- policy from Government on public spending and the funding framework
- medium term financial obligations
- prudent use of financial reserves
- drive for continuous improvement and value for money
- commitment to support the strategic alliance with Warwickshire PCC and the delivery of existing savings plans.

Some of the key points raised during the presentation included:

- that the policing element of the budget presented had been prepared for the Strategic Alliance and the budget requirement apportioned to each force in accordance with the agreed cost sharing approach of 69% West Mercia and 31% Warwickshire
- the proposal was for a rise of up to 1.99% in the precept for 2014/2015 (subject to confirmation of the referendum trigger which was still awaited). A Band D property currently paid £178.72 p.a and the proposed precept would increase the level to £182.28 (the equivalent of a 7pence increase a week)
- the wish to provide an additional 49 Police Community Support Officers (over and above the number planned by the former Police Authority)
- an increase in community safety grants
- the establishment of the Community Ambassadors Scheme
- an increase in the number of Special Constables
- a greater focus on rural crime, business crime and cyber crime
- the planned use of £36.6m of reserves over 5 years (allowing for reserves at a minimum level of £12m)
- further savings of £9.7m were planned for 2014-16 and further savings requirements of £20.7m were expected over the period to the end of 2018/19 (£30.3m in total).

During considered discussion the following principal points were raised by the Panel:

- There was a variance of views amongst Panel members in relation to the proposed increase of up to 1.99%. It was stated that Shropshire Council was not proposing an increase in its Council Tax and its Panel Members were of the view that there should be no
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increase in the precept and that further consideration be given to achieving further savings in the existing budget by more efficient service delivery. Other Panel members commended the budget and recognised the need to increase the level of the precept

- Assurance was sought that the use of reserves would continue to be risk assessed throughout the term of the MTFP
- As the budget had been prepared for the wider Strategic Alliance, it was difficult to identify the West Mercia specific budget. A West Mercia specific budget was requested for future years
- A spend of circa £190,000 as contribution to support the Police Federation was considerable; was there an assessment of the spend?
- Could the savings be delivered in a shorter timescale?
- Was the Commissioner assured that the IT upgrade programme was sufficiently resourced to complete the project successfully?
- What was the Commissioner's proposed contingency should the referendum level fall to 1.5%?
- Whilst appreciating the importance of rural, business and cyber crime, concern was raised that much police time was spent on mental health issues, as such consideration should be given as to how this could best be addressed
- What access would the West Mercia Force have to aviation vehicles post 2018/19?
- Assurance was sought that no savings or additional expenditure were being proposed which predicated a single Commissioner for West Mercia and Warwickshire
- It was recognised that the council tax base was buoyant and this represented a growing demand on the police service.

In response to the comments made, the Commissioner's representatives advised the Panel that:

- If the precept was not increased an additional savings of £1.5m would be necessary from the budget
 - Consideration would be given to the level of funding to the Police Federation, however as it was established in statute discussions would need to be framed accordingly
 - There was the potential to revisit timings around savings, however careful consideration already been given to what was considered to be achievable
 - If the referendum level fell to 1.5%, the 0.49% variance would need to be delivered
 - The budget for the Strategic Alliance had been calculated on a 69%/31% split; in future years the budget would be illustrated in separate columns
 - Discussions about how best to deal with mental health issues would take place; it was important to ensure
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that the police had the right routes and vehicles to escort individuals appropriately from police care to health care

- Assurance was given that two separate Police and Crime Commissioners would remain for West Mercia and Warwickshire. For any future changes, the involvement of the Home Secretary and changes to statute would be required.

RESOLVED that the Panel was supportive of the Commissioner's proposal to set a proposed precept of 1.99% for 2014/2015 (subject to the caveat set out in the proposal above).

[This was not a unanimous decision of the Panel as members from Shropshire Council present did not support the Commissioner's proposal].

(The formal report of the Panel to the Commissioner on his proposed precept is attached to these minutes).

67. West Mercia Police and Crime Plan (agenda item 6)

The Panel considered the three broad areas of changes and variations proposed for the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia 2013-2017 (the 'Plan'). The changes had been highlighted as 'tracked changes' in the original Plan document for ease of reference. The three broad areas were:

- Changes to update the plan to the current position (e.g updating of figures)
- Changes relating to performance monitoring
- Revisions in delivery proposals.

Following recent media coverage about the reliability of crime recording, the Deputy Commissioner wished to assure Panel members of the reliability of reported crime figures for West Mercia Police.

During considered discussion the following principal points were raised by the Panel:

- It was considered good practice to ensure that appropriate and timely updates of relevant information was to be made to the Plan whilst ensuring access to the original Plan and any subsequent iterations
- It was requested that consideration be given to referencing mental health in the updated plan.

RESOLVED that the Panel agreed the proposed changes and variations to the Police and Crime Plan 2013/17.

(The formal response from the Panel to the Commissioner on his proposed changes and

68. West Mercia Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report (agenda item 7)

variations to the Police and Crime Plan is attached to these minutes).

The Panel was provided with a report which updated progress in delivering the 11 objectives contained within the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2017; a performance monitoring relation to the success measures contained within the plan; and a brief outline of other key activities which he and his officers had undertaken during the time period 1 October 2013 – 30 December 2013.

The Commissioner reported to the Panel that:

- the consultation on the draft business crime and rural crime strategies had concluded on 31 January 2014 and work would take place to finalise the strategies and accompanying delivery plans. The budget proposed the use of reserves for five years to support the tackling of rural, business and cyber crime
- It was acknowledged that some of the 'watch' schemes were more successful than others and work would be undertaken to assess and develop such schemes.

During considered discussion the following principal points were raised by the Panel:

- Were any changes being considered to tackle the 50% level of non-payment of fixed penalty notices given for shoplifting crimes?
 - An effective restorative justice pilot scheme had been established in South Worcestershire, however it was disappointing the scheme had not been dispersed and had been concluded
 - Would offences resolved via restorative justice be included in the relevant statistical information in order that the complete picture was captured; and how would the restorative justice strategy be developed?
 - There was much merit around 'watch' schemes e.g neighbourhood watch and farm watch. What methods were in place to communicate information e.g the number plate of a suspected vehicle?
 - How effective was the new neighbourhood policing model?
 - As cyber crime was undertaken (most often) on an international scale, what were the parameters used by West Mercia Police to actively pursue such crime and at what stage would it transfer to another agency?
 - Assurance was given that offences which were resolved via restorative justice were included in the crime statistics. The restorative justice strategy would be based on national guidance but will be tailored to the West Mercia and the Alliance's needs.
 - what work was being done to tackle cross-border issues?
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In responding to the Panel's comments and questions the Deputy Commissioner and supporting officers stated that:

- Fixed penalty notices were one method available amongst many for use in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice and community resolution provided the opportunity to consider an appropriate response by which the criminal was reprimanded and the victim was satisfied with the outcome. The Chief Constable stated that he would look into the 50% level of non-payment
- A strategy around restorative justice was being put together to be delivered across the West Mercia area
- A review of neighbourhood watch schemes highlighted that the current method of communication of information was not the most appropriate therefore consideration was being given to other options
- The new neighbourhood policing model had received positive feedback from communities and officers. It was important that there was effective communications between local teams and their communities e.g through PACT meetings, attendance at parish councils etc. A bi-monthly newsletter was sent to all parish councils which provided updates on local policing and from the Commissioner
- In relation to cyber crime, it was reported that there was a growing need to deal with such crime and deal with such elements as seizing equipment, processing data and information etc. It was acknowledged that cyber crime (from bullying via social media, to identify theft, to accessing data) was challenging and was a growing threat. Within West Mercia there was a need to help educate individuals and businesses about these threats and for businesses to be reshaped accordingly. Whilst West Mercia Police would deal with certain levels of cyber crime, national agencies would need to be engaged at the appropriate time. It was anticipated that statistics relating to cybercrime would increase
- West Mercia Force sought to deliver borderless policing and work was undertaken with neighbouring forces. The Commissioner had pledged support to tackle rural crime, which was an crime which often crossed Forces' borders.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report Update.

**69. Presentation on
ICT and the Capital
Programme
Investment for
Technology**

The Panel were provided with a presentation on the investment planned for ICT within the West Mercia Police and the Strategic Alliance.

Some of the key points raised during the presentation included:

(agenda item 8)

- The aim to develop and introduce a single ICT system across both forces; this was both complex and challenging as historically police services had operated separate systems
- To date everyday applications such as e-mails, calendars and the HR system had been integrated with more work to be done on the more operational systems
- The introduction of tetratabs had increased the visibility of officers within their communities and would further increase in time as further integration and introduction of new systems and command and control capability takes place
- Future developments included digital support for forensic services, a digital repository for the storage of e.g digital interviews; the development of e-commerce e.g firearms license; the ability to digitally collate and store evidence e.g photos, affidavits etc. Such progress would seek to delete inefficiencies in current practices through technology e.g reduce the need to go back to a police station
- Whilst deliberations were taking place about the Strategic Alliance, the ICT investment was minimal so there was now a need to ensure appropriate investment in technology to help deliver change and efficiencies whilst also reducing support costs
- £2m was required to ensure the protection and security of the information and to ensure sophisticated encryption capabilities
- Work was being undertaken on a national level, across the justice system, to develop 'digital criminal files'; this technology was currently being piloted with the intention for its use across the whole of the criminal justice system.

RESOLVED that the Panel notes the presentation provided on the investment planned for ICT within the West Mercia Police and the wider Strategic Alliance

70. Resourcing the and West Mercia Police and Crime Panel (agenda item 9)

The Panel considered a report which outlined the draft budget for the operation of the Panel which had been drawn up by the Lead (host) Authority.

Confirmation of the actual grant amount from the Home Office to the Panel was expected during May 2014, therefore the lead authority has projected a no change grant amount for 2014/15 of £53,300 for administration and running costs plus an additional £920 per annum per member (a total of £15,640) to fund necessary expenses.

Following discussion by the Panel it requested that the reconciled end of year budget for 2014/15 be made available to Panel members in due course.

RESOLVED that the Panel approved the draft budget

| for 2014/15.

The meeting ended at 16.40p.m

Chairman



