

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Tuesday, 10 September 2019, - 11.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Mr S J Mackay (Chairman), Mr R C Adams, Mr S Bowen, Mrs C Clive, Mr R Evans, Mr A D Kent, Mr J Grubb, Mr J Lavery, Mr W Parr and Mr K Sahota

Also attended:

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
Natasha Noorbakhsh, Policy Officer, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
Tracey Onslow, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Assistant Chief Constable Geoff Wessell, West Mercia Police

Tim Rice (Senior Public Health Practitioner),
Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2019 (previously circulated).

(A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

305 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. The changes to the substantive membership were:

Sebastian Bowen had been appointed for Hereford Council and Peter Whatley was replacing Sarah Rouse for Malvern.

306 Named Substitutes

None.

307 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Barry Durkin, Jabba Riaz, Peter Whatley and Michael Wood.

Declarations of interest were made as follows:

- Julian Grubb was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police)

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Mackay was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police). |
| 308 Public Participation | None. |
| 309 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting | The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. |
| 310 Serious and Organised Crime Strategy Consultation | <p>The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced the draft Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Strategy and the PCC’s Policy Officer went on to explain the process that the Strategy had been through to date, this included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Consultation from 9 July - 15 August 2019 (including this Panel) • the publicity around it, via the PCC’s website, the West Mercia Police website, a press release to all media outlets across West Mercia, social media (Facebook and Twitter) and an email to key stakeholders and partners including: West Mercia Police, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Groups (SOCJAGs), Local Authorities, NHS, Public Health and Prisons & Probation. <p>The Panel was advised that one formal response to the Consultation was received during the consultation period. The response was submitted on behalf of Telford and Wrekin Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and was welcomed by the PCC, who had responded to it accordingly. This meeting was a further opportunity for the Panel to provide the PCC with comments for consideration.</p> <p>During the discussion, the following main points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Member suggested that if the Police were aware of where SOC Groups were operating, then it should follow that more criminals were apprehended. The Assistant Chief Constable advised that SOC was very complex and sometimes it was difficult to dismantle and disrupt activity as some groups were deep seated. However, when criminals were identified they |

were tackled

- It was confirmed that the underlying theme of the Strategy was preventing the problem at source, this included looking at socio and demographic factors including school exclusions
- The Strategy stated that almost 70% of Organised Crime Groups in operation in West Mercia were involved in the illicit drug trade. A Member questioned whether there was an awareness amongst recreational drug users of the knock-on impact of their drug use. The PCC explained that one of the recommendations related to drug awareness raising
- It was reported that as part of the recent government spending round, the PCC welcomed the additional funding proposed for tackling crime and was pleased that it was a government priority. The detail would be available around mid-December
- A Member expressed concern that the rate of re-offending for the SOC cohort was significant, with almost half of all serious and organised criminals re-offending within a year of release from custody. The PCC was asked if the problem was insurmountable and explained that the policy was to deal with the problem at source and support the rehabilitation of criminals too
- It was suggested that it would be helpful if the Strategy was monitored with a separate performance framework. The Policy Officer confirmed that plans were in place for this and the framework would be put together over the next few weeks
- It was further suggested that some of the recommendations should be strengthened to replace 'could' with 'would' or 'will'. The PCC agreed to take this suggestion forward
- The rise in the number of cases of child sexual exploitation (CSE) was a worrying trend and was a focus of the Strategy. The DPCC advised that there were recommendations around working with partners (particularly education and Ofsted) to engage with and support as many excluded children as possible and also provide diversionary activities. In addition, there was a Home Office Strategic Framework Review relating to CSE, two key areas of which were the illicit drugs market and school exclusion
- A Member questioned whether it was good practice to have police community support officer's (PCSO) on the boards of School

Governing Bodies. The PCC advised that all neighbourhoods had local policing teams which should have links with schools in their area, but may not necessarily have PCSO's appointed to their governing bodies

- The PCC agreed with the suggestion that cases seemed to move slowly through the criminal justice system and agreed to look at the key performance indicators (KPI's) in respect of this and report back to the Panel
- The ACC confirmed that there were internal systems in place to identify and deal with any internal criminal activity
- Recommendation 8 about the PCC using his influence to engage with businesses at all levels, particularly those targeted by OCGs, to promote crime reduction, prevent re-victimisation and reduce demand on the police was referred to. It was suggested that local businesses suffered continuous attempts of fraud, which were usually reported to Action Fraud UK, which it was suggested was not usually effective and that the problem would be better dealt with locally. The PCC agreed that this was an issue that required further discussion about how those causing most harm were dealt with. It was noted that Action Fraud was a reporting centre and didn't investigate specific crime but passed them back to the police.

In summary, it was agreed that:

- the performance framework for the SOC Strategy would be brought back to the Panel
- the recommendations would be strengthened to replace 'could' with 'would' or 'will'
- The PCC would look at the KPI's in respect of the pace that cases moved through the criminal justice system and report back to the Panel.

311 Rural Crime

The Panel received a report summarising of the PCC's work in relation to rural crime including the development of the Rural Crime Strategy and the outcome of the recent Facebook Live holding to account meeting on rural crime. It also included an overview of rural crime data and examples of how rural crime issues were being addressed.

A copy of the draft Rural Crime Strategy was circulated to the Panel and comments were welcomed. The draft Strategy was released for consultation in September and

responses would be shared with the Panel at its November meeting.

The PCC's strategic commitment to address rural crime was contained in the Safer West Mercia Plan. Contained within the objective, Reassuring West Mercia's Communities, the PCC stated that he would hold the Chief Constable to account for:

Making sure voices and priorities are heard and acted on from within our rural communities, via the Rural Matters plan to ensure their specific needs are addressed.

The PCC acknowledged that there was more work to do to improve the confidence in rural communities that if crime was reported, action would be taken. The increased numbers of police officers would impact all areas and all areas were policed. The PCC advised that there needed to be clarity around how improvements were measured.

During the discussion, the following points were made:

- A Member suggested that as part of improving the confidence of the rural communities, the Rural and Business Officers should meet with local councillors regularly and attend parish and town council meetings. The PCC responded that this did happen
- It was suggested speeding was a major problem for rural communities. The PCC agreed that excess speeding caused harm and was anti-social in nature, but that resolving the issue involved partners working together and that the Police were part of the solution, not all of it. It was confirmed that speed limit reductions were a matter for the Council and the Police were consultees.
- Almost 40 areas had a Community Speed Watch Scheme in West Mercia. A Councillor questioned whether a permanent sign notifying that an area had a Community Speed Watch Scheme could be used in place of a mobile sign being used at the time that the Scheme was operating as this may encourage volunteers to participate. The PCC agreed to look into the matter and report back
- Speed Indicator Device Signs (SIDS) were very popular and effective at improving behaviour
- Social media was very good vehicle for sending out messages to the farming community.

312 Victim Advice Line

It was agreed that:

- The results from the draft Rural Crime Strategy consultation would be shared with the Panel at its November meeting and the final Strategy would be shared with the Panel at its February 2020 meeting
- The PCC would look into whether a permanent sign notifying that an area had a Community Speed Watch Scheme could be used in place of a mobile sign being used at the time that the Scheme was operating
- Panel Members would contact the National Farmers Union (NFU) in their areas to highlight and obtain feedback on the draft Strategy.

The Panel had requested an update on the Victim Advice Line (VAL) which went live in April 2019.

The PCC advised that overall, he was pleased with the progress of the service and was confident that it was moving in the right direction, but there was still more to do.

It was noted that referrals from the Force needed to improve along with the referral numbers going on to wider support providers, it would take time to re-configure workloads and the associated cultural changes required.

313 Police Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring

The Panel was invited to consider the Police and Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report for April-June 2019.

The PCC highlighted:

- Criminal Justice Performance - for June 2019, the number of cases discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) stood at 9.6%, the 29th best performance in the country. Although the biggest factor accounting for discontinuance was a victim failing to attend/refusing to give evidence, West Mercia still had one of the highest success rates (89%) of victim and witnesses attending court
- Digital roll out for Special Constables –The PCC had invested £250,000 in smart phones and body worn video for the 300 or so Special Constables in West Mercia
- Strategic Alliance update – Negotiations with Warwickshire regarding future arrangements were continuing. A variety of offers of collaboration had

been made to Warwickshire, responding to their concerns and requests. Warwickshire had decided that long term they wished to stand alone but had stated that they needed West Mercia's assistance to move to that state. Negotiations were therefore centering on fixed-term collaborations on functions that required longer for Warwickshire to transition to a stand-alone position, thereby reducing West Mercia's cost contribution. All other functions would be separated out from 9 October. West Mercia would be in a position to stand alone from 9 October in every area. There were benefits to West Mercia to collaborate in relation to some functions for longer, for example IT. However, there were also potential disadvantages, particularly the potential for confused governance, inability to reform and disproportionate financial contributions that caused West Mercia to serve notice in relation to the current arrangements. These risks were being addressed through the negotiations.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- In response to a question about the success of Operation Snap (a facility for the public to submit digital footage showing potential traffic offences). The ACC advised that it was successful but that he would provide the Panel with KPI's
- It was confirmed that there would be some vacancies for Special Constables, but the recent focus had been of filling Police Officer vacancies
- Modern day slavery – The PCC confirmed that this was a regional priority and an area that the CC was held to account for, in addition to awareness raising
- It was questioned why confidence in Telford and Wrekin had noticeably reduced. The PCC advised that that sometimes confidence was affected by external forces but overall, he expected to see a steady improvement
- It was noted that for the 8th consecutive month, Herefordshire's child at risk performance volumes were above the monthly average. The monthly average had increased from 173 to 211 offences per month. The PCC agreed to look into the reasons for this increase and report back to the Panel.

It was agreed that:

314 Panel Work Programme

- The Panel would be provided with performance information in respect of Operation Snap
- The PCC would look at the reasons why for the 8th consecutive month, Herefordshire's child at risk performance volumes were above the monthly average.

The Panel considered and agreed its Work Programme as detailed in the Agenda.

It was agreed that the membership of the Budget Scrutiny Group for 2019-20 would be Councillors Bowen, Whatley, Grubb, Lavery and Mrs Clive (Lay Member of the Panel).

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman