

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Wednesday, 5 February 2020, - 11.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Mr S J Mackay (Chairman), Mr M Wood (Vice Chairman), Mr R Evans, Mr D Tremellen, Mr S Bowen, Mr B Durkin, Mr Kuldip Sahota, Mr J Lavery, Mr R C Adams, Mr A D Kent, Mr P Whatley, Mr J Grubb and Mrs C Clive

Also attended:

Anthony Bangham, Chief Constable, West Mercia Police
John Campion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner

Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

Elizabeth Hall, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

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 27 November 2019 (previously circulated).

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

326 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

327 Named Substitutes

Councillor Peter Dyke was substitute for Councillor Helen Dyke.

328 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Helen Dyke and William Parr.

Declarations of interest were made as follows:

- Julian Grubb was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police)
- Steve Mackay was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police)
- Kuldip Sahota declared that he was standing for

		Police and Crime Commissioner in the May 2020 election.
329	Public Participation	None.
330	Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting	The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
331	West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Proposed Precept and Budget 2020/21	<p>The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) apologised for the delay in confirming the proposals in respect of the Budget for 2020/21, Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2022/23 and the precept for 2020/21. The delay was due to the general election and late grant notification from Government. The PCC thanked the Panel Members for their understanding and further apologised that detailed Scrutiny via a budget task group had not been possible this year due to the delay.</p> <p>The headlines from the proposals were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Net Revenue Budget for 20/21 of £235.8m including an extra £11m • 93 additional police officers • £225.20 per year average Band D Council Tax (£8.54) • £0 reserves used on reoccurring expenditure • £130.7m Govt Grant (an increase of £8.269m from 19/20 Grant) <p>The funding supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial stability without reliance on reserves • An increase in police visibility • Investment in tools for police officers to carry out roles more effectively • Extra resources being placed in areas of public concern – investigations into tackling drugs and most serious crimes • Greater investment in crime prevention and victim services • Putting West Mercia at the forefront <p>The Budget had been set in the context of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand and complexity • A 2.5% Police Pay Award

- Increased Employers Contribution for Police Pensions
- ICT infrastructure investment/reform
- Delay in delivering reform and savings due to delay in end of Policing Alliance
- Every penny of taxpayer's money spent in West Mercia

The total funding of the proposals for 20/21 was £235.805m:

- £102.303m (43%) from Council Tax (inc. Collection Fund Surplus)
- Proposed 3.94% (£8.54 Band D average) Council Tax increase – Additional £5.48m revenue
- £130.718m (55%) Government Grant
- £2.784m (1%) use of Reserves for one off expenditure

The PCC pointed out that the key risk for which there was no specific provision in Earmarked Reserves was, the obligation for reasonable costs in implementing the exit strategy for the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire and in negotiating and implementing a revised collaborative arrangement.

Recruitment of police officers was continuing and by the end of July 2020, there would be 2238 police officers, including the additional 93 officers being recruited this year. The extra funding should ensure further development of clear metrics to measure impact of additional officers/resources and the dedicated Problem Solving Hub, which included increased resources for tackling rural crime.

The Chief Constable highlighted that:

- The Force priorities had been reset in January 2019 and were safer people, safer roads and safer homes.
- Last year, 115 additional Police Officers were recruited, and all were in post and on response shifts, with some areas in West Mercia having new teams providing improved Police Officer visibility.
- The total uplift of Police Officers was 308 (including the additional 93 to be recruited this year). This year, it was intended to move the more qualified and experienced officers into the investigative, problem solving and safer roads

teams. 88 officers would move to support the investigative model, 20 officers to support local problem solving teams to tackle the issues that matter most to local people and 20 officers to support safer roads.

The PCC reassured the Panel of his ongoing commitment to the Safer West Mercia Plan priorities ie putting victims and survivors first, building a more secure West Mercia, reforming West Mercia and reassuring West Mercia's communities.

The PCC placed on record his thanks to the Treasurer for the work that had gone into preparing the proposals, especially given the tight timescales this year.

During the opportunity for questions the following main points were discussed:

- A Member asked the PCC why he had given a commitment last year for a 2.99% increase for the policing portion of council tax, had decided to consult on 2.94% and had then recommended a 3.94% increase, especially as the government settlement had provided more funding than was expected. In response, the PCC advised that the increase to the individual was small and if the precept was lower, a bigger savings target would have been needed. It would have also been necessary for an ongoing reliance on reserves, whereas the proposals put forward would reduce the reliance on reserves.
- The importance of joint working with partners to tackle problems in the community was emphasised. The PCC pointed out that not all problems had a solution but could be mitigated. It was acknowledged that good communication between all partners and the community was key and that there was always room for improvement.
- A Member made the point that, whilst acknowledging the service improvements for West Mercia's communities to date, this was the second year where the proposed precept was higher than that indicated in the previous year's Medium Term Financial Plan and it was important that the Panel was provided with assurance that the previous objectives had been met. The PCC reminded the Panel of the rationale for setting the precept and agreed that performance management was not always as effective as it should be, but the aim was always to achieve

continuous improvement.

- In response to a question about the cost of the splitting of the Strategic Alliance, the PCC advised that there would be an obligation for West Mercia to pay reasonable costs in implementing the exit strategy for the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire and in negotiating and implementing a revised collaborative arrangement. The PCC confirmed that there was no agreed exit strategy to date.
- It was noted that the Home Secretary's mandate letter confirmed that independent experts from the policing sector would be provided to assist the Forces in assessing and agreeing the costs of termination and charging mechanisms for any ongoing collaborations. The report from this independent assessment was expected in due course.
- In terms of road safety issues, it was confirmed that West Mercia Police worked closely with Highways England.
- The PCC advised that investment was being provided for education, prevention and diversionary activities in respect of drug abuse.
- A Member suggested that the response rate to the Budget Consultation Survey was poor. The PCC whilst acknowledging that the Survey response wasn't high, advised that the Survey was part of a range of options used for consultation including face to face meetings, social media, press release/media and that he was content that he understood public opinion.
- Given the level of capital costs and risk associated with IT and its role in supporting improvements in efficiency, the PCC was asked how it would be measured that the money was well spent. The PCC advised that he would wish to see improvements time wise and an increase in public confidence.
- The Panel would like to be kept updated about progress with the transformation of IT systems and would like to see original project plan for IT and progress against the Plan. It was therefore agreed that the original plan would be shared with the Budget Task Group at its mid-year review.
- The location of Bridgnorth Police Station was discussed and the PCC confirmed that where possible he would want to share premises but the fire station at Bridgnorth wasn't big enough for the co-location following an increase in the number of Police officers in the town.

Following the discussion:

- The precept proposal outlined to increase the precept by 3.94% for 2020/21, adding £8.54 average to the annual Council Tax bill for a typical band D home was agreed by a majority of the Panel.
- The Panel would work with the PCC to develop better measures for monitoring performance and implementation of the Police and Crime Plan, in particular for the priorities that the Budget was aimed to support.
- Given the level of capital costs and risk associated with IT and its role in supporting improvements in efficiency, the Panel would like to be kept updated about progress with the transformation of IT systems. It welcomed the PCC's offer to share the original project plan for IT during the year. The Budget Task Group would include IT in the items it would follow up at its mid-year review.
- The Panel remained concerned at the potential impact on the Budget of the costs of separating from the Alliance with Warwickshire, both in terms of costs to services in West Mercia whilst negotiations continued, and the level of costs associated with the implementation of the exit strategy.
- The Panel through the Task Group would wish to be informed about issues impacting on the budget during the financial year. Specific issues such as the Alliance separation may be considered by the full Panel or private briefings where necessary.

A letter informing the PCC of the Panel's decision would be sent. It was noted that the PCC was required to have regard to the Panel's report and provide a response which would be published.

The Report was noted.

**333 Police & Crime
Plan Activity
and
Performance
Monitoring
Report (Oct -
Dec 2019)**

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

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- A Member expressed concern about the increase in drug related offences and possession of weapons over the last few months and enquired whether this was a general trend or whether there were other reasons for the increase. The PCC explained that some of the increase was due to increased police activity around county lines in addition to exposing the problem and it being more of a focus. Going forward as more resources were put into the investigative teams, there would also be more investigative outcomes.
- A question was asked about what the impact of the increased numbers of policing had been and it was suggested that better communication and feedback to communities would raise the confidence of the public in the Police. The PCC acknowledged that the Force needed to be better at communication and he was holding the Chief Constable to account for this.
- It was confirmed that the Home Secretary had engaged the independent experts from the policing sector to assist the Forces in assessing and agreeing the costs of termination of the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire and charging mechanisms for any ongoing collaborations.
- There were multiple entry routes for the recruitment of police officers including degree and degree level apprenticeships.
- In response to a question about what a positive outcome would be for measuring the performance of West Mercia Police in complying with the best use of the Stop and Search Scheme, the Chief Constable advised that it would be finding something and detaining a perpetrator.
- It was noted that theft of/from vehicles was reducing, but the PCC was concerned about the levels of reporting.
- The long term trend for burglary was still up but was reducing year on year.
- There were increased volumes of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), but numbers were low overall, the increases may be due to the various operations in progress.
- It was noted that the Police Officer recruitment

334 Work Programme

was going well but that 180 experienced officers were retiring. The PCC was able reassure the Panel that he was confident in the skills mix of the Force to cope with the loss of the experienced officers.

- Action Fraud - November 2019 was the 7th consecutive month that volumes had remained above the average and if this trend continued, the monthly average would increase. The PCC suggested that this required a national response as Action Fraud was no longer fit for purpose. He was lobbying government and working with the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) on this.
- Concern was expressed about the abandoned rate for 999 calls, which had increased for the quarter and the PCC was asked what measures were being taken to improve this. The PCC advised that the performance had improved with 90% of call being answered in 10 seconds and was subject to weekly monitoring.
- Shropshire were taking part in a NHSE Pilot in respect of mental health and if successful would be rolled out across West Mercia.

The Report was noted.

The following additions to the Work Programme were noted:

- Confirmation of the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner - June
- Child Safeguarding – June
- Visit to West Mercia Police Control Room
- Progress on GET SAFE
- Budget Task Group
- Performance Framework for the Budget

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm

Chairman