

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Monday, 21 September 2020, - 11.00 am

Minutes

Present:

Mr S J Mackay (Chairman), Mr M Wood (Vice Chairman), Mr R Evans, Mr W Parr, Mr D Tremellen, Mr R C Adams, Mr A D Kent, Mr T A L Wells, Mr S Bowen, Mr K Sahota, Mr S Cronin, Ms H Dyke, Mrs C Clive and Mr A Luckman

Also attended:

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
Deputy Chief Constable Julian Moss, West Mercia Police

Tim Rice (Senior Public Health Practitioner) and Sheena Jones (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 June 2020 (previously circulated).

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

346 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

It was noted that Councillor Nazir (Redditch Borough Council) had been appointed to the Panel in place of Councillor Julian Grubb.

The Chairman explained that this meeting was being held online to comply with regulations issued for the coronavirus pandemic and enabled Panel meetings to take place, visible to the public, whilst they could not take place at a specific place such as County Hall.

347 Named Substitutes

None.

348 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Durkin and Lavery.

A declaration of interest was made by Cllr Mackay as he was a retired Police Officer in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police).

349 Public Participation

None.

350 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman.

351 The Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) Rural Crime Delivery Plan Update

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced the Rural Crime Strategy published in March 2020 following public consultation and consultation with the Panel. The Strategy set out the PCC's aspirations for tackling rural crime based on the PIER approach of Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement and Reassurance.

Each PIER section within the Strategy set out a number of commitments to facilitate delivery of the overarching aspirations and objective of the Strategy, which was to reduce the crimes that had most impact on rural communities. The commitments and associated activities were detailed in the Strategy Delivery Plan which provided an overview of activity in relation to rural crime, to enable monitoring of progress against the commitments as set out in the Strategy.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- Fly tipping was an increasing problem for rural communities and whilst acknowledging that it was a primary responsibility for local authorities, the Police were keen to work in partnership to tackle the issue. It was suggested that CCTV may be a good deterrent.
- A number of Councillors had concerns about speeding in their communities. The PCC advised that speeding was addressed mainly through the Road Safety Strategy and was an area of focus for the Police but acknowledged that there needed to be more promotion around public awareness. The PCC reminded Members about Operation Snap which was an initiative where members of the public could report and submit digital footage showing potential traffic offences via a secure online form
- The increased usage of nitrous oxide was discussed, the PCC believed that this was a problem in both rural and urban areas and retailers restricting the supply of it would be

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helpful in tackling it

- A Member suggested that hedge removal in the bird breeding season was a problem in Herefordshire and that reported incidents often didn't receive a response
- In response to the discussion about staffing levels in the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, the PCC confirmed that where there a post existed, it should be staffed and if this was not happening Members should advise the PCC
- A Member highlighted a staffing issue in Shropshire which DCC Moss reassured he was aware of and addressing
- The PCC highlighted that as part of the commitment to improve road safety, a new Safer Roads Fund had been launched which aimed to improve road safety. The fund was available to the public, local authorities, fire and rescue services and those involved in voluntary organisations by application
- A Member raised an examples of stolen farm equipment which, although had received a very good Police response had taken a while for the recovered equipment to be returned to the farmer and so was disruptive in terms of business continuity. The PCC agreed to look at the details of the specific issue outside of the Meeting.

It was noted that the Panel would receive a regular update on the outcomes of the Strategy in due course and that would be added to the Work Programme.

The Panel had before them a Report provided in response to the Panel's request for an update on the dissolution of the Strategic Alliance between Warwickshire and West Mercia Police.

During the discussion the following main points were made:

- The Force was on target for achieving both the operational and organisational budgeted savings of £5.284m of which a significant proportion could be directly attributed to the Alliance split and included progress made during the COVID19 pandemic
- The Force had a new command and control system, SAAB Safe, which went live at the end of June 2020. SAAB Safe was implemented more quickly than anticipated towards the end of the Alliance, with the implementation simplified and

353 Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report (April - June 2020)

the process significantly streamlined when acting as a single force

- The new system integrated with local and national intelligence tools, enhancing the information available to the Operational Control Centre (OCC) and officers responding to calls for service, reducing duplication associated with accessing multiple systems.
- In response to a Members concern about a lack of response when reporting crime which was taking place in West Mercia but being reported from outside of West Mercia eg when on holiday and viewing through CCTV that a home had been broken into. The PCC reassured the Member that the details of the crime should get passed to the correct Police Force irrespective of where it was reported from and dealt with accordingly, although he acknowledged that the process may not be as slick as it should be
- The separation from Warwickshire had allowed for greater articulation and focus on Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) which in the 2017 PEEL Effectiveness report, HMICFRS graded West Mercia as 'inadequate' in the response to tackling SOC. This improvement was recognised in the last HMICFRS PEEL inspection report and SOC was now rated as 'good'. No other inspection areas were rated as inadequate
- Reference was made to the specific savings attributable to the Alliance separation, which would be examined in greater detail as part of the Budget Scrutiny process.

The Panel considered the Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report (April – June 2020).

The PCC highlighted some examples of recent activity in support of the Safer West Mercia Plan's four key objectives:

- £341,363.39 emergency COVID money had been received from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to support victims of sexual abuse and violence and domestic abuse
- £550,000 had been secured from the MoJ Safer Streets fund, which was launched as part of a commitment to invest into towns and cities and ensure they were as safe as possible for residents. The area of Brookside, in Telford, was put forward after suffering from burglary and thefts for a number of years

- As mentioned in the previous discussion, the PCC had allocated £280,000 to the Safer Roads fund for initiatives which aimed to improve road safety.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the PCC established a Coronavirus response fund. In total £47,279.94 of the £50,000 earmarked was given out to community groups, charities and organisations allowing groups at the heart of the pandemic to purchase essential items such as face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser, as well as printing supplies and envelopes, enabling the most vulnerable and at risk to be supported throughout.

The PCC's Chief Executive explained that the Home Office had reformed the way reviews of police complaints were dealt with. From February this year, PCCs had taken on extra responsibilities for reviewing how complaints were dealt with where the complainant was not happy with the outcome if a case had been investigated by West Mercia Police's Professional Standards Department. This had resulted in a large number of people contacting the PCC's office seeking a review of often very complex and challenging cases. An independent and qualified external body had been appointed to assess reviews on the PCCs behalf, although the final decision on the outcome remained with the PCC.

During the discussion, the following main points were discussed:

- In March, HMICFRS advised all PCC's and Chief Constables that the inspectorate would be suspending its inspection programme in response to Coronavirus. This was followed by a further update in July that the HMICFRS inspection programme would commence in October, with a focus on the COVID-19 response and the force had been informed that it would be one of the forces inspected at part of this.
- In response to a question about whether the PCC was minded to submit another business case for fire governance at the appropriate time, the PCC advised that he still believed that it was the right thing to do but was awaiting the outcome of the White Paper before making further decisions
- The PCC was commended on the Scheme whereby he had donated eight bicycles to a Worcestershire based educational centre that aimed to develop positive attitude and skills, for future employment, in young people. It was

agreed that further details of the Scheme would be sent to the Panel for information

- It was noted that the performance information relating to Safer Roads stated that of the 56 KSI casualties in Q1 20/21, 19 were pedal cyclists and 14 motorcyclists. Further information around the context of the 19 pedal cycle casualties and comparative information for the previous year was requested
- Previously, the types of issues the Safer Roads Fund was used metal police officers and village gates
- A Member expressed concern about the effect that the Coronavirus pandemic was having on the wider criminal justice system and on the resources of the Force. No trials were heard in any of the Crown Courts across West Mercia between March and July and there remained a significant backlog in cases at both the Crown Court and magistrates' courts. Given the capacity constraint of the Courts and the number of cases backing up, West Mercia Police Witness Care Units were now supporting over 21,000 victims and witnesses, an increase of 36% since March 2020, which had placed additional demands against police resources
- In response to the question as to the reason why drug offences and Cybercrime were rated red (above the upper control limit), the PCC advised that crime was more visible during the COVID pandemic but it was difficult to say whether the crimes were really increasing until there was a return to normality. The PCC would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that the right level of support and resources were in place
- It was confirmed that the metal policemen were used on a rotational basis in liaison with school management teams to tackle parking and speeding issues in the vicinity of school premises
- Reference was made to the August thematic holding to account session on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion and one of the key findings that sexual harassment was expressed as an area of concern; the Force was working with the women's network to assess the extent of sexual harassment. The PCC confirmed that that he was confident that the appropriate processes were in place, but an area of focus would be around having the confidence to report
- The PCC advised that he was not assured in

respect of Outcome 16 (Victim does not support action) and was concerned that victims could be let down. This would continue to be a focus of the holding to account sessions with Chief Constable.

The Panel's attention was drawn to the new format of the Report and Members were invited to send comments to the Chairman which could then be forwarded to the PCC for consideration.

354 **Complaints
2019-20 Annual
Report**

The Panel received the Complaints 2019-20 Annual Report which was one of the Panel's functions under the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2012 to deal with non-criminal complaints about the conduct of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and his Deputy.

During 2019-20, 2 complaints were recorded concerning the conduct of the PCC. Both were resolved informally. No complaints were referred to the Sub-Committee.

5 further purported complaints were received but were not recorded as the content did not meet the requirements of the Regulations.

The report was noted.

355 **Work
Programme**

The Panel discussed its work programme and it was agreed that:

- Any Members who were interested in joining the Budget Scrutiny Task Group (who hadn't already put themselves forward), should advise the Chairman
- Given the Panel's widespread concern about PCC's role in respect of road safety, consideration should be given to setting up a Task Group to look at this matter in depth, noting and taking into account the Scrutiny that had already been carried out by Shropshire Council. Members were asked to notify the Chairman if they were interested in joining a Task Group.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

Chairman

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