

Minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

County Hall, Worcester

Friday, 4 February 2022, 11.00 am

Present:

Cllr Aled Luckman (Chairman), Cllr Barry Durkin (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Jeff Anderson, Cllr Graham Ballinger,
Cllr Andrew Beaumont, Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Mrs C Clive, Cllr Roger Evans,
Cllr Jim Lavery, Cllr Nigel Lumby, Ms Beth McDowall, Cllr Vivienne Parry,
Cllr James Stanley and Cllr Tom Wells

Also attended:

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Andy Champness, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and
Crime Commissioner
Chief Constable Pippa Mills, West Mercia Police
Tracey Onslow, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Paul Benfield, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager
Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 November 2021 (previously circulated).

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

417 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

418 Named Substitutes

Cllr Andrew Beaumont for Cllr Adam Kent (Bromsgrove District Council).

419 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Adam Kent (Bromsgrove District Council) and Richard Overton (Telford and Wrekin Council).

There were no declarations of interest.

420 Public Participation

None.

421 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

422 Appointment of an Independent Co-opted Lay Member

The Chairman explained the process for the appointment of a Lay Independent Co-opted Member of the Panel.

It was noted that the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel – Independent Member Appointments Panel had carried out the shortlisting process on 13 December 2021 and the interview process on 10 January 2022 and had appointed Ms B McDowall to the position.

Ms McDowall was welcomed to the Panel and given the opportunity to introduce herself.

423 Confirmation of the Chief Finance Officer (Treasurer)

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced the Report which provided detail on the proposed permanent appointment of a Chief Finance Officer (Treasurer) and gave an overview of the appointment process that had taken place from July 2021 to January 2022.

It was noted that the Panel must satisfy itself that the preferred candidate selected by the PCC had the professional competence to undertake the role and had significant personal independence to be able to act operationally independent of the PCC.

The PCC commended the preferred candidate, Paul Benfield to the Panel.

The Panel was supportive of the preferred candidate Paul Benfield being appointed as Chief Finance Officer (Treasurer).

424 West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Precept and Budget 2022/23

The Panel was asked to consider the:

- (i) West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Proposed Budget 2022/23 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 – 2025/26; and
- (iii) provide a report to the PCC on the proposed precept, including any recommendations, outlining whether it vetoed the precept or not.

The PCC gave a presentation to the Panel on his proposed budget, highlighting the following areas:

The proposed Budget overview was:

- Budget of £260.485m (£16.1m on 21/22)
- Central funding of £133.4m (£7.2m on 21/22)
- Band D precept = £249.66 (£9.47 on 21/22)
- Additional 125 officers (524 since 2016)
- Investments in force modernisation
- Extra £1m for prevention
- Management of significant risks

The proposed Budget was in the context of the following risks and challenges:

- Covid-19
- The cost associated with Officer uplift
- A major investigation
- Maturing the approach to ensure long term financial stability
- Increase in inflation including pay and energy
- Continued modernisation and transformation

The Chief Constable outlined the strategic vision for West Mercia Police. The key strategic priorities were: keeping communities safe, delivering excellent service and being a great place to work. The Panel were also advised about how the extra 125 Police Officers would be allocated.

The PCC went on to outline the Budget Consultation process and the proposed return on investment.

During the opportunity for questions, the following main points were made:

- A Member expressed concern about one of the findings of the Consultation process, which was the public perception of the lack of police visibility in communities. The PCC explained that he was reassured that operationally, there was a commitment to improve Police visibility but it would take time to achieve.
- A Panel member suggested that historically police in Shrewsbury had been more visible than they were now, and that as a result petty crime

was increasing. The PCC acknowledged the need to continue to drive up improvement in the area of Police visibility and reminded members that there were named local Police Officers for each area and to assist with the promotion of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, he would share posters with the Panel which they could use to help promote the Teams.

- The PCC confirmed that the response to the Consultation was statistically valid.
- Reference was made to the PCC's current financial Reserve Strategy being less reliant on reserves, in contrast to the previous PCC's financial Reserve Strategy.
- The PCC acknowledged that in prioritising the Digital Strategy, it was also important to be inclusive and provide options for residents who were not digitally connected.
- A Member questioned the significant investment already made in the additional 400 Police against tangible outcomes, highlighting that Police visibility and enabling quality investigations were still key priorities. In response, the PCC advised that the investment being made was to reinforce the emergency response, enable quality investigations and more visible policing. The PCC hoped that the Panel felt that there was sufficient rigour to the proposals and if not, invited Members to hold him to account.
- In response to a members comment that perhaps there was a cultural issue around Police visibility that money wouldn't solve, the Chief Constable explained that the investment in the Safer Neighbourhood Teams would allow more Police Officers to be out in the community and the Community Charter (which would be reviewed annually) also provided a very clear commitment to this.
- The PCC assured the Panel that improving the public perception of Police visibility would take time, there needed to be visibility through the Safer Neighbourhood Teams for which he would continue to hold the Chief Constable to account.
- A Member highlighted that he had supported the PCC's Budget last year but didn't feel that it had translated into better outcomes in the priorities that mattered most to residents ie improved road safety. The PCC explained that some of the road safety issues were to do with road design/infrastructure not always enforcement. The PCC provided assurance that more money had been invested in road safety and that the Police were able to respond to road traffic incidents.
- It was noted that additional money had been provisionally allocated to reducing harm on the roads subject to a Business Case being provided by the Police to the PCC – a copy of the Business case was requested.
- The PCC was asked if there was more funding available for Speed Indication Devices (SIDs) as they were very effective – the PCC referred to the Scheme detailed on the website, the link for which would be circulated to Panel Members.
- In terms of the affordability of the PCC's portion of the suggested Council Tax increase, the PCC confirmed that he had given serious consideration to the increase and the alternative options. He believed that an increase which equated to approximately 30p per week (for a Band D house) was affordable and also favourable when compared with other local authorities who were proposing larger increases.

- A Member highlighted that there was often a reluctance for communities to report crime due to the perception that 'nothing would be done about it'. The PCC urged councillors encouraged communities to report crime and reiterated the role of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams in the communities.
- A Member referred to the assumption that the Collection Fund would have an in-year Surplus for 2021/22 in the region of £0.700m which would be distributed to West Mercia in 2022/23 to offset the deficit from 2020/21. The West Mercia Finance Manager confirmed that he was confident that there would be a surplus at the year-end and that it was not a decision that the Panel was required to make.
- The PCC confirmed that the additional new Police Officer posts were in addition to existing Police Officer numbers.
- The PCC explained that the additional investment in quality investigations to ensure that more offenders were brought to justice was due to an insufficient number of crimes not having the appropriate outcomes.
- The 58% increase in homicide offences in West Mercia was a worrying trend, the PCC acknowledged the concern and explained that there was a significant amount of work happening in this area and reassured the Panel that West Mercia Police were responding appropriately.
- A Member expressed concern about the proposed increase in the precept (almost to the maximum allowed). The PCC explained that he was backing the Police Force with right amount of funding for which he could be held to account and in addition would hold the Chief Constable to account for. West Mercia had the lowest Council Tax in the Country and he believed it was at the right level to achieve the priorities as set out.
- A Member questioned the increase in the reserves, the PCC explained that the increase in reserves was due in the main to the cost of a major investigation.
- The PCC explained that when he took on the role, the Service was heavily reliant on reserves, whereas the current Strategy was less reliant on reserves and thus more sustainable. The previous reserves were used to invest in services such as IT. The Finance Manager confirmed that the increase in the Council Tax equated to 1.98%.
- The PCC confirmed that following the split from the West Mercia Warwickshire Alliance, the budget savings predicted were being achieved. It was confirmed that from 1 October 2021, the arrangements for providing IT support to Warwickshire Police were finalised, this was expected to run until 2023 and the support was being paid for by Warwickshire.
- The PCC confirmed that there was no funding of the main budget for reoccurring services from reserves.

The meeting was adjourned from 12.35pm-12.55pm.

The Vice-Chairman proposed that the proposed precept was vetoed. On being put to a name vote, the proposal was defeated and therefore the Police and Crime Commissioners proposed precept would move forward.

As required by Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Panel would formally make a report to the PCC on the proposed precept.

425 Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report

The Panel had before them a report on the overview of activity undertaken by the PCC in support of the Safer West Mercia Plan and an update on Police performance.

During the opportunity for discussion and questions, the following main points were made:

- The Panel was pleased to note that there had been an increase in the number of arrests for offenders of domestic abuse.
- A Member referred to a troubling report from the Metropolitan Police in respect of the professional standards of Police Officers. The PCC assured the Panel that West Mercia Police would not tolerate inadequate professional standards and would invest in support to drive out such behaviour.
- The PCC confirmed that there was a growing prevalence of homicides in younger people and inter-familial trends. In order to tackle the issue, it was important to ensure partnership working and information sharing wherever possible.
- A Member raised a concern about rural crime, in particular lamping. The PCC reiterated the importance of talking to the Safer Neighbourhood Teams who could give advice and support and also build up intelligence.
- A reference was made to what would happen in the case of an offender non-attendance at a Drug Diversion Programme and the PCC advised that there were consequences of non-attendance.

426 Work Programme

The discussion of this item was deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm

Chairman

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Budget Presentation - PCC John Campion
February 2022

Proposed budget: Overview

- Budget of £260.485m
(↑£16.1m on 21/22)
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(↑524 since 2016)
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Victims First

Secure

Reformed

Reassured



Budget context

Challenges and Risks

Covid-19

Costs associated with officer uplift

Major investigation

Maturing the approach to ensure long term financial sustainability

Rising inflationary costs including pay and energy

Need for continued modernisation and transformation of West Mercia Police

Key Proposed Investments and Improvements

125 additional officers

Focus on improving investigations and service to public

£1m extra for prevention

Digital transition and infrastructure

Plan on a page

Our strategic vision

West Mercia Police provides a quality **policing service, protecting people from harm. We are visible and open to all, inspiring everyone to take pride in and feel ownership of their service.**

Our organisational priorities

► Keeping communities safe - we will:

- Work with partners and communities using our collective assets to deliver innovative and effective approaches to harm prevention
- Listen to, respond and communicate effectively with our communities
- Understand community needs and issues to maximise early intervention and problem solving opportunities
- Deliver an appropriate and proportionate service.
- Build public confidence
- Be flexible to adapt and respond to an increasingly complex and challenging environment

► Delivering excellent service - we will:

- Ensure quality service to victims
- Provide a sustainable, accessible and consistently excellent service to the public, whether in person, online or on the phone
- Uphold high standards, to reflect our pride in the service we deliver
- Maximise data, tools and tactics to investigate and deliver services to a high standard
- Communicate effectively with communities and partners to ensure they are informed and empowered to build confidence and prevent further harm

► Being a great place to work - we will:

- Ensure fairness, transparency and consistency in everything we do
- Have meaningfully visible leadership to the force, to the public and to our partners
- Recruit an increasingly diverse workforce and further develop an inclusive working environment
- Enable excellent communications to ensure an informed and engaged workforce
- Ensure everybody is empowered to support the delivery of our vision
- Keep things simple
- Deliver and evolve the digital and physical tools necessary to remain operationally effective
- Deliver on our corporate social responsibility

Delivering:

- Safer communities and effectively preventing crime and harm
- Proactive relationships with communities and partners
- Visible and accountable local policing
- Reassurance to communities

Delivering:

- Excellent victim support from the most appropriate agency
- High quality investigations
- Positive outcomes
- Enhanced victim satisfaction and confidence

Delivering:

- An empowered and confident workforce that are skilled, equipped and enabled to deliver an excellent service
- Staff and officers with the support they need to maintain their wellbeing
- The best use of our resources



What will it mean for the public?



Hearing the public

Budget Consultation

- 1,413 responses to 1st survey
- 69% willing to pay more for policing
 - Majority supported £8-£10 increase

Broad range of engagement to hear the views of the communities of West Mercia

- Public Meeting
- Social Media
- Local Media / Radio

Public Priorities

- Anti Social Behaviour
- Visibility & Accessibility of Officers
- Road Safety
- 62% want more officers
- 52% want greater focus on investigating crime

“Mandate to deliver my promises to the communities in West Mercia”

Return on Investment

Key Benefits to be Delivered

- Enhance delivery of the Local Policing Community Charter
- More criminals brought to justice
- Improved service to victims
- Greater Police visibility and accessibility
- Improved response to the public
- Significant shift to preventing crime and harm
- Reducing environmental impact of policing

“My mission is to make sure every pound counts in policing”

Key Metrics to Monitor Delivery

- Public confidence
- Victim satisfaction
- Timeliness and quality of investigations
- Unresourced incidents
- Road collision KSIs
- Town & Parish feedback
- Reductions in most serious / impactful crimes
- More crime solved



“Backing West Mercia Police with the resources they need to deliver efficient and effective policing to keep our community safe”