

Minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

West Mercia Police HQ, Hindlip Hall, Worcester WR3 8SP

Wednesday, 15 June 2022, 1.00 pm

Present:

Cllr Aled Luckman (Chairman), Cllr Barry Durkin (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Nigel Lumby, Cllr Jeff Anderson, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Jim Lavery,
Cllr Helen Jones, Cllr Nyear Nazir, Cllr Graham Ballinger, Cllr James Stanley,
Mrs C Clive and Ms B McDowall

Also attended:

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
Chief Constable Pippa Mills, West Mercia Police
Gareth Boulton, Deputy Chief Executive
Tracey Onslow, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

Paul Kinsella, Public Health Practitioner
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 4 February 2022 (previously circulated).

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

427 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was noted that Cllr Helen Jones was replacing Cllr Adam Kent as the substantive member for Bromsgrove District Council and Cllr Paul Watling was replacing Cllr Richard Overton as the co-opted member for Telford and Wrekin Council.

428 Named Substitutes

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel Wednesday, 15 June 2022
Date of Issue: 17 August 2022

Councillor Steve Reynolds (Telford and Wrekin Council) was substituting for Councillor Paul Watling.

429 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Paul Watling (Telford and Wrekin Council), Sebastian Bowen (Herefordshire Council), Vivienne Parry (Shropshire Council) and Rob Adams (Wychavon District Council).

Councillor Helen Jones declared an interest in Item 8 – the Joint HMICFRS & Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection Report: An unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in West Mercia Police as she was Independent Custody Visitor for West Mercia Police. Cllr Jones withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

430 Public Participation

None.

431 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 4 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

432 Draft Annual Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia 2021-22

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) introduced his Draft Annual Report which members of the Panel were required to review and to make recommendations on to the PCC for consideration. Following which, the PCC must then respond to any report or recommendations that the Panel has made prior to publishing the final version on the report.

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

- The Panel Chairman suggested that some more context was necessary against the performance details included in the draft report, in particular about visibility and accessibility. The PCC would take this on board, including drawing out the focus he had placed on this in the holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable
- In the section about 'Putting Victims and Survivors First', a member queried whether continuity of the Sexual Abuse and Violence Navigator post could have been secured through direct funding. The PCC explained that, whilst important, there were other potential avenues for funding and a suite of services were available to provide the range of interventions that victims might need to access. He would provide more detail to the Member outside of the meeting

- A member queried whether there were any issues preventing domestic abuse cases going to court. The Deputy PCC reported that all partners involved were committed that cases were prosecuted successfully, but an evidence threshold had to be met.
- With reference to the statistics on page 19 of the report about an increase in homicide cases and the impact on demand and resources in the Force, a member asked the PCC what plans were in place to address this type of event. The PCC responded that investigative capacity had been a central aspect of his budget and he had been reassured in holding to account work that there was flexibility to stand up parts of the major investigations team and stand down other resource. Improvements in areas such as the forensics capability also demonstrated the improvements being made in productivity. However, a high-profile case in Shropshire was having a major impact on the Force currently
- In response to a query about whether it was appropriate for the PCC to fund CCTV, as set out on page 27 of the report, the PCC outlined examples of where he considered certain initiatives would not happen without his involvement. He viewed his role as being part of a coalition to fund initiatives and address community concerns, where other sources of funding were limited.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed that the Panel would prepare a report to the PCC with comments on the draft Annual Report.

433 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection Report: PEEL 2021/22 - An Inspection of West Mercia Police

The PCC introduced the Report and circulated a copy of the Monthly Assurance Meeting notes from May 2022. These highlighted the action and rigour being taken in response to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection findings of the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) of West Mercia Police as part of its PEEL inspection programme of all police forces within England and Wales (published April 2022).

HMICFRS assessed the Force on nine different areas of policing, of which 8 were graded in the report, as follows:

- Preventing crime - good
- Treatment of the public, protecting vulnerable people, managing offenders and developing a positive workplace - adequate
- Investigating crime, responding to the public, good use of resources - requires improvement.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- In response to a Members suggestion that the report was not good, the PCC explained that there had been some changes in the

inspection methodology which meant that it was not possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this inspection with those from the 2018/19 report. The PCC explained that West Mercia's performance was middle of the road, neither good nor damning. Regular updates would be provided to the Panel.

- A Member referred to the onsite fact-finding visit which had culminated in hot debrief session (paragraph 10 of the report) and questioned how the actions identified were being dealt with. The PCC explained that the HMICFRS Liaison Officer in the Force was a conduit to ensure that the actions were being fed into West Mercia Police and the governance processes.
- AFI9 and 10 relating to protecting vulnerable people (currently rated as adequate) were discussed. AFI9 was about data mapping and improving data flow which the PCC explained would take a while to achieve and AF10 was concerned with the appropriate use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders, which the Force had been promoting the use of.
- The PCC explained how the HMICFRS Inspection process worked, including the pre-inspection process, strategic briefing, inspection activity, hot debrief and the reporting and publication process.
- The PCC confirmed that it was expected that investigating crime (an area which required improvement) would have been flagged as an area of weakness.
- A Member sought assurance that by the time of the next inspection, improvements would have been made. The PCC reassured the Panel that he was confident that the Force could do better and that there would be improvements by the time of the next Inspection but if not, the Panel could hold the PCC accountable.
- With regard to AFI2 (stop and search), in order to ensure parity across all areas of West Mercia, the Force had reviewed and rewritten the data pack used for stop and search to ensure that elements were overlaid to better understand disproportionality. In addition, a database had been developed and was being tested.
- In response to a Member's request for the detailed improvement plan (action tracker) on the progress made against the recommendations from this Report, the PCC agreed to work with Officers to see how this could be shared.
- A Member questioned how the PCC ensured quality assurance in terms of the delivery of improvement and was advised that the Chief Constable invited staff from the Office of the PCC to observe meetings and this was overseen by the Senior Policy Manager.
- The PCC confirmed that he was assured that the Service Improvement Board (SIB) was effective. The tracker was subject to ongoing scrutiny through the SIB, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, attended by key stakeholders from each of the service areas and the PCC's Senior Policy Manager.

Joint HMICFRS & Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection Report: An unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in West Mercia Police

The PCC introduced the Joint HMICFRS & Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection Report: An unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in West Mercia Police. Some of the findings of the Inspection were disappointing, however the PCC was assured that the Force had the necessary practices and processes needed to make the changes to improve services. The Panel was referred to the notes of the Monthly Assurance Meeting for May 2022 which detailed the action being taken to address the concerns from the Inspection and the PCC advised that there would be appropriate investment in Estates. It was noted that a temporary Superintendent had been appointed to the Custody function.

The PCC reported that the Home Secretary would be advised of the action being taken to address the areas for concern identified in the Report.

During the discussion the following main points were made:

- A Member referred to the 2014 Inspection and questioned why of the 29 recommendations made during the 2014 inspection 10 were outstanding. The PCC reminded the Panel that the last inspection was a joint inspection, due to the West Mercia/Warwickshire Alliance and referred to the detailed action plan to in place to address the current areas of concern.
- With regard to providing support to people in a mental health crisis (pre-custody), the PCC explained that there was a very clear process for handling calls when they come into the Operational Control Centre, where there were Vulnerability Officers employed to signpost to the appropriate services as needed.
- The PCC agreed with the suggestion that the cost of living crisis could result in an increase in crime.
- A Member queried the cause of concern related to use of force in custody. The PCC explained that this was a very controlled environment with CCTV/video recording and that the concern could be about the recording rather than the actual use of force. The PCC further explained that West Mercia had an Independent Custody Visitor Scheme which he had requested be refreshed.
- It was noted that the report suggested that more support was required from local authorities to improve the provision of alternative accommodation for children who were charged and refused bail. The DPCC advised that where children were with the Police for a period of time, contact would be made with the relevant local authorities to ensure that appropriate support was provided by Social Workers. On occasions this could take time to arrange due to shift patterns and working practices.

435 Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report

The Panel received an update on the activity undertaken by PCC in support of his Safer West Mercia Plan.

It was noted that after six years of working alongside the PCC, the Deputy PCC had announced her decision to step down from the role and would leave the PCC's office in June. The Chairman thanked the Deputy PCC for the support provided to the Panel during her tenure and wished her well for the future.

In addition, since the last Panel meeting, the Chief Executive had also left the organisation. Both roles had been externally advertised and would be subject to open and transparent recruitment processes. In accordance with legislation, the preferred candidate for each post would be subject to a confirmation hearing by the Panel. The Deputy Chief Executive was fulfilling the statutory duties of the Chief Executive until the successful applicant took up their post.

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

- In response to a Member question about whether any government funding was available to West Mercia Police for Operation Lincoln (the Ockenden Review into maternity services at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust), the PCC advised that the support already provided by the Home Office was welcomed and further discussions were taking place which the Panel would be updated on in due course.
- The Panel was pleased to note that the termination of all remaining ICT services hosted by West Mercia in support of Warwickshire Police had been mutually agreed. West Mercia would no longer be providing ICT support to Warwickshire as of the end of June this year. This would enable West Mercia to have a much greater focus on its own digital transformation.
- With regard to Police Officer uplift, it was noted that national data had assessed the force as 'on track' to deliver the final year of officer uplift. However, due to a reduction in applications and an increase in attrition rates; the student officer pipeline needed to be carefully monitored to ensure this was not at risk. The PCC confirmed that this was on his radar.
- A draft Estates Strategy had been developed in conjunction with West Mercia Police and would go out for public consultation in the very near future. The Panel would be updated at its meeting in September.
- A Member suggested that the firearms range was not fit for purpose, in response the PCC advised that a business case was being developed to address this.

436 Work Programme

It was noted that an additional meeting would need to be arranged for the confirmation hearing of the Chief Executive and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm

Chairman

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