

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Wednesday, 4 February 2015, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm

Present:

Minutes

Cllr Brian Wilcox (Herefordshire) - (Vice Chairman)
Mrs Helen Barker (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Mrs Charlotte Barnes (Shropshire)
Cllr Sebastian Bowen (Herefordshire)
Mrs Anne Hingley (Wyre Forest)
Cllr Miles Kenny (Shropshire)
Cllr Tony Miller (Worcestershire)
Colonel Tony Ward OBE (Independent Lay Co-opted Member)
Cllr David Wilkinson (Worcester City)
Cllr Michael Wood (Shropshire)
Cllr Ron Davis (Wychavon)
Cllr Adam Rea (Malvern Hills)

Also attended:

Bill Longmuir (West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner [PCC])
Barrie Sheldon (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner)
Andy Champness (Office of the PCC)
David Shaw (West Mercia Police)
Rob Phillips (Office of the PCC)
David Clarke (Office of the PCC)
Tim Rice (Worcestershire County Council)
Sian Clark (Worcestershire County Council)

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The agenda papers (previously circulated)
- B. The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel.

103 Welcome and Introductions (Agenda item 1)

The Vice-Chairman, Mr B Wilcox, was in the Chair. He warmly welcomed all in attendance to the meeting.

104 Named Substitutes (Agenda item 2)

Cllr Adam Rae (Malvern Hills) for Cllr David Hughes and Cllr Ron Davis (Wychavon) for Cllr Paul Middleborough.

105 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllr Keith Roberts (Shropshire), Cllr Rae Evans (Telford and Wrekin), Cllr Keith Austin (Telford and Wrekin), Cllr Margaret Sherrey (Bromsgrove), Cllr David Hughes (Malvern Hills) and Cllr

	(Agenda item 3)	Paul Middlebrough (Wychavon).
106	Public Participation (Agenda item 4)	None.
107	Confirmation of minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel held on 9 December 2014 (Agenda item 5)	The minutes of the Panel meeting held on 9 December 2014 were agreed as a true record.
108	Consideration of the Proposed Precept (Agenda item 6)	<p>The Commissioner, in presenting his proposed precept increase of 1.99% highlighted the following points to the Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective partnership working across organisations and sectoral interests was essential not least due to the financial pressures of the public sector • In considering the proposed level of the precept, the Commissioner recognised that whilst reserves were good he was taking a long term view, taking into account of future budget pressures. There was a need to ensure a good policing service whilst looking to the future delivery of service and taking account of changes in policing (e.g cyber-crime). Whilst crime and harm had reduced in the West Mercia area it was important not to complacent, especially as demand for policing evolved. • A particular focus was the prevention of crime. There was much concern about the numbers of prisoners and the re-offending rate of 63%. By reducing re-offending and preventing crime the wider community would benefit. An initiative to establish a non-profit making company within West Mercia prisons, which would produce goods for purchase by the public had been agreed, and it was hoped that such an initiative would be a flagship for West Mercia's approach to strengthen the prevention agenda. <p>The Deputy Commissioner highlighted within a presentation Commissioner's vision for crime reduction</p>

including: the key players in crime reduction, what works to reduce crime, the growing and changing demands of policing (including child sexual exploitation, cyber-crime, mental health and modern slavery). By focussing on crime prevention through education, early intervention and rehabilitation, the outcomes expected included reducing harm and crime within communities, reducing demand on policing and reducing the number of victims. The Commissioner was to be an enabler of the partnership working needed to work closely with prison leavers, troubled families and excluded pupils by sharing resources and information (such as assessments) and ensuring compatibility of IT. A scoping exercise would be carried out across the region's schools and colleges to assess what education was being provided about various aspects relating to crime and policing.

The Commissioner sought the Panel's support to the increase in the precept of 1.99% which would be focussed on prevention and reducing offending. The Commissioner's finance officers provided the Panel with an overview of the detail contained in the reports.

In discussion the following principal points were raised:

- The comments of the task and finish group were shared, which included; it was noted that the West Mercia Commissioner focus on prevention and rehabilitation was not replicated Warwickshire; it was hoped that the creation of businesses within West Mercia's prisons would be supported financially by the Home Office; what would be the impact on the Government's desire to establish overarching IT networks for the police forces?; there was a need to ensure a stronger focus on capital funding and mitigate against slippage of projects; the level of reserves were strong, therefore how scientific was the rationale to propose a 1.99% increase in the precept?; whilst the recruitment and training of 250 police officers was to be welcomed, it was disappointing that the recruitment had previously been put on hold; it was recognised that the budget was complex; there was a need to ensure that resources were properly used (sweating the assets); clarification was sought on the contributions made to the police federation; and it was clearly understood that the prevention agenda was a clear priority for the Commissioner.
- Responding to the points raise, the Commissioner

and his officers stated that Warwickshire and West Mercia Commissioners had different priorities, which were reflected in their individual budgets; reserves were being considered strategically across the term of the MTFP; capital funds had changed with now an increased focus on deliverability and an increased accountability mechanism about the delivery of projects; 1.99% would add £1.5m into the budget, without this increase a further £1.5m savings (or £7m across the MTFP) would need to be delivered, additionally the £1.5m would secure the base budget. It was hoped that the creation of businesses with the local prisons would not prove to have a negative impact on established local businesses and it was expected that the profit from the businesses would be used to fund other schemes. The Police Federation had been established in statute and was an important vehicle by which e.g terms and conditions could be negotiated and by which effective policing could be delivered. The West Mercia Police Federation was in the vanguard of delivering pace and change in the organisation and locally 2 posts were supported financially. The Chief Constable underlined the importance of the Police Federation locally.

- Responding to a question the Commissioner confirmed that the 49 Community Support Officer posts (as discussed in previous meetings) were now included within the establishment base budget and that the 250 police officer posts would see the Force up to strength by November 2015
- It was commented that the Home Office had recently announced its intention to seek to assimilate police ICT provision nationally. In response it was stated that the Home Office owned 27 national ICT systems, all but 5 would be retained, with the remainder being overseen by a separate ICT organisation. Work was progressing to encourage Forces to be interoperable and deliver significant savings.
- The creation of businesses in prisons would provide an opportunity for wider business and office skills e.g numeracy, computer, marketing skills which would assist individuals on release with employment opportunities. Confirmation was provided that the creation of the businesses within the prisons were not dependent on the precept

rise and should, in time, be self-funding

- Shropshire Council had agreed a 0% change to the council tax for 2015/2016 and its members on the Panel would not be supporting the 1.99% proposed rise in the precept. The Commissioner was asked to reconsider the asset base available to him, and the need to either sell or use the assets in a better way, and to use further reserves to balance the budget as opposed to raising the precept. In response the Commissioner acknowledged the comments about the assets and confirmed to the Panel that he had an 'Estate Policy' and that he would be looking at the estate intensely to ensure that it was delivering value. The proposal to increase the precept by 1.99% was not a decision lightly made by the Commissioner, but he stated that it was important to consider the future and to also off-set some of the issues that may arise from the reductions in local authority budgets.

RESOLVED that the Panel supports the Commissioner's proposal to set a proposed precept of 1.99% for 2015/2016.

[This was not a unanimous decision of the Panel as members from Shropshire Council present did not support the Commissioner's proposal].

(The formal report of the Panel to the Commissioner on his proposed precept is attached to these minutes).

**109 West Mercia
Police and
Crime Plan
Activity and
Performance
(Agenda item 7)**

The Panel considered a report which provided an update on progress in delivering the Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia 1 April 2013 – 31 March 2017 which covered the time period 1 October - 31 January 2015.

In discussion the following principal points were raised:

- It was noticeable that, within the comparator group, West Mercia was second to bottom on several indices including assault with/without injury, rape, and domestic burglary. In response it was stated that the current situation, as portrayed, was for a host of reasons, not least due to the integrity of the data as recorded by the police, and the confidence in victims reporting crimes to the police. It was important not to be complacent and the public were encouraged to report all crimes,

including business and rural crimes. The Chief Constable stated that he was not satisfied with the West Mercia Force's position within the most similar group category, and whilst he was not prepared to chase a numerical target, he was confident in the integrity and accuracy of the recorded data. It was suggested that the Panel received an update of the situation in a future meeting.

- Responding to a question about response times, the Chief Constable stated that this was a meaningful target which had a direct correlation with recruitment. Control Room call pick up time was now improving, and in times of high call levels, calls could be tripped into neighbouring forces as all had a common platform
- It was noticeable that the number of special constables within the Force had dropped. In response the Chief Constable stated that special constables were an intrinsic part of the force and were valued for their wealth of experience. A report on the special constabulary had been completed and an update would be provided at a future meeting
- In responding to a query about the increase rates of re-offending in Herefordshire (specifically), it was stated that whilst the rate of re-offending was increasing, the Force was getting better at catching the perpetrators. The success of the new Community Rehabilitation Companies was key to delivering reductions in re-offending rates.

RESOLVED that the Panel noted the content of the update report and that the following items be considered at a future Panel meeting: (a) Report on the Special Constabulary; (b) Update report on Crime Recording / Most Similar Group.

110 Dates of Future Meetings (Agenda item 8)

The Chairman acknowledged the work of the Panel members and noted that several would be candidates in local elections. On behalf of the Panel the Chairman specifically thanked Cllr Paul Middlebrough (Chairman of the Panel) and it was agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to him from the Panel for his Chairmanship since the start of the shadow Panel arrangements. It was also noted that Sian Clark, who had provided the Panel with support since its inception, would be leaving Worcestershire County Council. Support for the Panel would be provided by Suzanne O'Leary from mid March

2015.

The meeting ended at 4.20pm

Chairman

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West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Mr Bill Longmore
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
PO Box 487
Shrewsbury
SY2 6WB

11 February 2015

Dear Mr Longmore

PROPOSED PRECEPT

In accordance with Schedule 5 to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, I write to inform you that the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel reviewed your proposed precept on 4 February 2014 in a public meeting.

As is required by the Act the Panel must formally make a report to you as Commissioner on your proposed precept; please accept this correspondence as the formal report of the Panel.

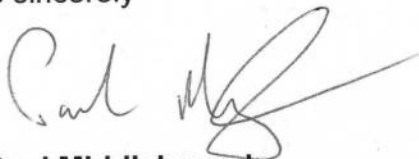
The proposal you recommended to the Panel was to; '*set a proposed precept of 1.99% for 2015/2016*'.

Following consideration and fulsome discussion by the Panel, and having taken account of the responses provided by you and your officers to questions from the Panel, the Panel was supportive of your proposal to set a precept for 2015/2016 which was 1.99% higher than the current 2014/15 year. The Panel noted that it is your intention to use the additional resources raised by the increased precept, in its entirety, to fund initiatives to reduce and prevent crime; the Panel will expect to receive regular updates from you on the success of these initiatives and the outcomes being achieved.

It must be noted that this was not a unanimous decision of the Panel as those members present from Shropshire Council did not support your proposal.

I note that you will be required to have regard to the Panel's report and provide a response which will be published; I look forward to receiving this response in due course.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Paul Middlebrough
Chairman of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

**Cllr Paul
Middlebrough**
Chairman, West
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