



Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel

Hosted by Somerset County Council Democratic Services



Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel

Thursday 5th February 2019

Present:

Local Authority Representatives:

Nigel Ashton (North Somerset Council), Cherry Beath (Bath & North East Somerset), Ann Bown (Sedgemoor District Council), Asher Craig (Bristol City Council), Stuart Dowding (West Somerset District Council), John Parham (Mendip District Council), Afzal Shah (Bristol City Council), Mark Shelford (Bath & North East Somerset), Jane Warmington (Taunton Deane Borough Council), Mark Weston (Bristol City Council), and Roz Willis (North Somerset Council).

Independent Members:

Richard Brown, Joseph Mullis, Andy Sharman and Clare Torrible

Host Authority Support Staff

Julian Gale - Strategic Manager

Patricia Jones - Principal Democratic Services Officer

Police and Crime Commissioner and Supporting Staff:

Sue Mountstevens - Police and Crime Commissioner

John Smith - Chief Executive Officer

Mark Simmonds – Chief Financial Officer

Joanna Coulon - Criminal Justice and Commissioning Officer

1. Apologies for absence

Councillors Wale, Drew, Goddard and Williams. Councillor Weston (Vice-Chair) chaired the meeting in the absence of Councillor Wale.

2. Public Question Time

The Panel heard from Trevor Mealham and considered a statement submitted in advance of the meeting by Noel Edmonds. Both matters concerned allegations of criminality involving Lloyds Banking Group and complaints against Police officers involved in the related fraud investigation.

Mr Mealham and Mr Edmonds sought the assistance of the Panel in initiating a full investigation into this matter.

Councillor Shelford (Chair of the Panel's Complaints Sub-Group) stated that the issues raised by Mr Mealham were the subject of a complaint against the PCC. It was noted that this would be considered privately outside of this meeting in accordance with the Panel's Complaints Protocol. Mr Mealham and other members of the public present at the meeting were advised that the Panel was sympathetic to their concerns and relevant information would be considered. They were assured that where possible, clarity would be sought around the issues raised in pursuance of the Panel's duty to hold the PCC to account.

For this purpose and to assist the Panel in reaching a conclusion, it was noted that agreement had been reached with the PCC in advance of this meeting that the Complaint's Sub-Group would be given access to the investigating officers and the details of the investigation carried out by the Constabulary into the Lloyds Bank Recovery issues.

The PCC stated that she was aware that this matter was of the utmost importance to the people present and that she intended to fully cooperate with any further enquiries. The PCC then read out a statement advising that extensive investigations had been carried out by the Constabulary and National Crime Agency and no evidence of criminality had been found.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2018

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

Councillor Shelford extended his thanks to the Chief Constable for the update on the Police investigation in Bath involving CCTV evidence.

6. Chairman's Business

None.

7. Commissioner's Update Report

The Commissioner provided the following updates:-

- a process to appoint an Independent Chair to Chair the Lammy Review Group commenced in January and key local stakeholders would be involved on the appointments Panel. The assistance of the Panel Members was sought in circulating the recruitment details.
- collaboration opportunities were being explored following a meeting with the Chair of Avon Fire Authority.

- A pilot was being trialled in North Somerset working with offenders identified as having a range of complex needs. Start to Finish aimed to reduce their risk of reoffending.
- The Panel would be briefed in advance of a statement regarding the Policing base in Bath.
- The Commissioner welcomed the Panel's proactive Scrutiny of the additional responsibilities placed on PCCs in relation to serious violence and knife crime. The final draft of the refreshed Police and Crime Plan would be brought to the Panel final meeting of the year on 12th March. A dedicated Serious Violence officer post was planned to support the development of the OPCC strategy. The PCC has committed to establishing a fund of £100k in local funding to be accessed on a match funded basis to take forward partnership activity to deliver the Serious Violence Strategy.

Below is a summary of the issues and questions raised by Panel Members:-

- - the PCC was invited to meet with the Taunton Domestic Violence Abuse Forum to discuss and plan for a more proactive approach to DA Awareness week in the coming year.
- It was acknowledged that support for families affected by the criminal justice system was under pressure. It was recognised that family law (a civil matter) did not fall under the remit of the Commissioner.
- It was suggested that the decision not to co-locate Police and LA services in Shepton Mallet and the breaking of ties with Mendip Council was a backward step in terms of collaboration. The Commissioner stated that Mendip had benefited from significant investment including last year's Precept rise with a number of vacancies filled.
- 5 PCCs would meet as a regional board as part of the development of the Reducing Reoffending strategy. The Commissioner assured the Panel that its objectives exceeded that of a "talking shop" and dialogue with the Ministry of Justice and Probation Service would continue to ensure that this remained a priority.
- The Commissioner was asked if there had been an increase or decrease in reported crime since the introduction of PCSOs. The Commissioner stated that reported crime in Avon and Somerset was lower than average. The Panel heard that early intervention was paying dividends in combatting crime. Violent Crime and Knife Crime in Avon and Somerset had increased by 5% and 6% respectively in contrast to national increases of 19% and 8%.
- It was suggested the role of disciplined sport and its ability to provide a distraction to crime should be acknowledged in the Police and Crime Plan. The Commissioner stated that the Police worked closely with boxing and football clubs and small grants were made available to them. She agreed to do more to promote activity.
- The Panel felt there was logic behind bike patrols but suggested the message/rationale could be conveyed more positively to the public. The Commissioner agreed to take this back to the Constabulary.
- The refurbishment of Yeovil Police station was delayed until March 2019. The Commissioner agreed to share a status update to the Panel following the meeting.

8. Standing Complaints Report

The Panel considered and noted a report of the Chief Executive (OPCC) providing an oversight of all complaints made against the Commissioner.

9. Work Programme Report

The Panel noted the Work Programme.

10. Formal Scrutiny of Medium Term Financial Plan and Precept Proposal

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the report and outlined the MTFP updates since the last briefing.

It was reported that the Commissioner proposed an annual Precept increase of £24.00 in line with the flexibility provided by the Government to raise additional money locally from Council Tax by up to £2 a month for the average band D household. The Panel noted that this would generate £15m new funds in 2019/20 subject to a 1.5% tax base increase.

It was acknowledged that the increase covered more than cost increases, but future planning after 19/20 had assumed a flat grant settlement, a return to a 2% capped precept rise, a 2% pay increase and this year's pension grant being a "one-off". The rise would enable the deficit to be avoided in 19/20 and provide funding for the recruitment of 100 new officers and a Policing strategy called Operation Remedy to specifically combat burglary, drugs and knife crime. A briefing note setting out the purpose of Operation Remedy was circulated at the meeting.

A financial analysis of the deficit positions for 3 levels of Precept was also circulated at the meeting. It was reported that a £12.00 increase would create an immediate deficit position, creating the need for immediate efficiency savings. The capital position was described as significantly under-funded with depleting estates.

Below is a summary of the issues and questions raised by Panel Members:-

- The Panel sought assurances that the recruitment programme would translate into additional officers and not just balance the establishment. The Commissioner stated that the Public had to see a difference and that she would ensure the Constabulary delivered on the recruitment pledge and the targeted areas for improvement.
- The Panel stated that certain parts of the force area were inherently disadvantaged by the Precept proposal – significantly more Band D properties existed in Mendip than Bristol with residents paying more per head as a result. Spending on Policing in Bristol far exceeded that spent in rural areas. The Commissioner outlined on-going activities and engagement in rural areas. The Panel was advised that this had been possible because of last year's ring-fencing of Neighbourhood Policing. She stated that Operation Remedy would work hand in glove with the Neighbourhood Teams and would ensure a specialist task force to work in the neighbourhoods.
- The Commissioner confirmed that the Police officer workforce was currently 5 officers and 30 PCSOs below establishment but this would be resolved by May 2019. The overall recruitment would counter the 150 retirements taking place over the coming year but also provide 100 new

constables and bring the establishment to 2750. It was clarified that serious crime would still be passed to a specialist investigative team and the detail was still to be worked on. The additional 100 recruits would target their response where needed irrespective of urban or rural demand.

- The Commissioner was asked how confident she was in the strategy behind the recruitment process. She conceded that the task was difficult but that she intended to focus on delivery and the assurances provided by the Chief Constable and HR. The CEO added that the Apprenticeship Scheme would inevitably make the task more achievable.
- The Commissioner was asked how she could justify the current Neighbourhood and intelligence gathering model given the 6% detection rate. If the cornerstone of Neighbourhood Policing was fostering local contacts to gather intelligence that ultimately led to arrests and sanctions for offenders, how was the Chief Constable being held to account for performance in this area.

The Commissioner stated that performance in this area could not be defended but there was now an opportunity to invest and make progress.

The Commissioner was asked how the Chief Constable was challenging his officers and PCSOs around Leadership to ensure that appropriate information as being gathered and developed - local Intelligence gathering in the Neighbourhood Teams(linking into the National intelligence model) was the bed rock of task allocation for the additional 100 officers being deployed under Operation Remedy. Given the current 6% detection rate for Burglary, the Commissioner was invited to comment on the change planned in intelligence gathering in order to make Operation Remedy a success.

The Commissioner stated that a holistic approach would be adopted and the Constabulary must deliver on investigations.

- There was general agreement that the scale of County Lines and the related violence and exploitation of young people posed a significant threat to the Public and a challenge to public services. The Panel recognised the resulting impact on Police officers with increasing sickness rates and mental health pressures, both of which contributed to increasing costs. It was suggested that if the Public was more aware of the wider implications, this could make the Precept rise more acceptable.
- The Panel stated that they were mindful of the impact on the Constabulary if the Precept proposal was not approved. If approved, the Panel stated their scrutiny in the future would benefit from an interim report on the strategy detailing the achievements/gains emerging from the investment.
- There was discussion around the Public's expectation of the Constabulary and the understandable disillusionment when reported crime was not addressed or followed up. The Commissioner accepted that the Public required reassurance and emphasised that prevention was key. PCSO numbers had been maintained and she was confident the Public would see a difference in performance around drugs, burglaries and knife crime. The Commissioner

emphasised that the intention was to increase the number of positive outcomes and deliver real improvements.

- The Panel advised the Commissioner that the proposal required something of measurable value that would demonstrate how effectively the organisation was achieving its objectives. The CEO urged caution around the negative effect of Key Performance Indicators which he felt had been shown to lead to the wrong behaviour.

There was a short adjournment and the Commissioner and OPCC staff withdrew from the room.

- Following discussion and on being put to the vote, the Panel RESOLVED to approve the Commissioner's proposal to increase the Policing Precept by £24.00 per annum for an average Band D property (14 members voting in favour and 1 against). This approval was subject to the following recommendations which were notified to the Commissioner:-
 1. An urgent improvement in transparency. The briefing note on Operation Remedy lacked detail and its tabling at the meeting was not acceptable.
 2. The development of a range of performance measures and matrices to enable the Panel to make an assessment of the effectiveness of the Budget and its allocation in the longer term
 3. Tangible improvements in tackling crime, particularly burglary and rural crime.
 4. The monitoring of the recruitment process by way of a timeline report to each Panel meeting on progress and levels achieved.

The Commissioner stated that she would do everything she could to deliver and hold the Chief Constable to account. The Commissioner commented on the Panel's reference to transparency and stated that a benefits package would be shared with the Panel and worked on with the Constabulary.

11. Proactive Scrutiny Session – Serious Violence Strategy and Refreshed Police and Crime Plan

Ann Reeder from Frontline Consulting introduced the item and summarised the purpose of the Panel's Development Day on 30th January 2019. This had enabled in-depth scrutiny of the responsibilities placed on PCCs by the Serious Violence Strategy and facilitated a more strategic approach to the Panel's review of the Police and Crime Plan.

Below is a summary of the principal issues raised with the Commissioner:-

- The Panel reiterated previous concerns around collaboration and the pace of change following co-location of the Fire Authority at Portishead. It was emphasised that dynamic leadership was needed to create operational effectiveness. Assurances were sought that collaboration would be at the forefront of decision making to make savings for the front line. The Commissioner stated that when the FA approved the Collaboration Strategy she would be asking the Chief Constable to take the appropriate steps in partnership with the Chair of the Fire Authority.
- The Panel sought a better understanding of the plans for Neighbourhood Policing and the Budget allocation process. Operation Remedy was highlighted as an example of targeted funding (£2m) and the Commissioner was asked if it was common practice to break the

Budget down to Constabulary departments for specific projects. The Commissioner reported that the Chief Constable was required to deliver the Police and Crime Plan and resources were allocated to priorities. The Panel stated that in order to hold the Chief Constable to account, it was important to be able to make a measurable assessment of performance – when it looked good and when it did not.

- The Panel stated that the key objective to “Protect the most Vulnerable from Harm” carried the risk of imposing a wider remit on the Police than tackling crime. It was suggested the Police could not operate as another branch of social services in the current economic climate. The Commissioner stated that resources were allocated on an “at risk” basis - examples of high risk being missing children and elderly people with dementia.
- The Commissioner was asked to comment on the lengthy timescales frequently involved in investigating and resolving complaints against Police officers. The Commissioner reported that 6-9 months was a target but this could be subject to other factors such as the IOPC’s method of working. The Commissioner stated that Body Worn Video was proving particularly useful in this context and the Deputy Chief Constable had challenged the IOPC on the length of suspensions. The Panel made the point that the Commissioner was now being directly challenged on this issue.
- The Commissioner was asked to comment on the reduction in the number of custody suites across the force area and the impact on officers in rural areas involved in transferring prisoners. The Commissioner stated that the changes to Police custody arrangements had resulted in fewer people being taken and held in custody. Experience had shown that less capacity was needed than was originally envisaged when the review took place.
- The Commissioner confirmed she had met with the new Sister’s Independent Advisory Group.
- The Commissioner was asked if the Panel should expect a formal response to the Key lines of Enquiry document provided in advance of the meeting.
- The #Jogon Campaign and the first successful prosecution of FGM were welcomed by the Panel. It was felt that Chief Constable Sara Thornton’s recent comment that misogyny should not be classified as a hate crime was unhelpful.
- It was recognised that Cyber Crime involved considerable resources. The Commissioner stated that there were plans to include Cyber Crime in Strategic Priority 2 – Strengthen and Improve Local Policing Teams.
- The Panel expressed concern about the sustainability and continued funding of the Road Map Call-In Project, a six month pilot programme aiming to reduce gang, drug and violent crime in the community. The Commissioner stated that it would be evaluated and an assessment made on its viability. The CEO added that the plan was to go forward on a match fund basis with partners and the new co-ordinator post was key to this.

It was reported that work was also underway with the Princes Trust involving pupils most at risk of grooming/exclusion in 5 schools in the force area.

- The Commissioner was asked if she intended to produce local versions of the strategic overarching plan. It was confirmed that local plans were now joint so this depended on the Local Authority - only Somerset had indicated they might be inclined to go this way. The CEO confirmed that the cover report would clarify this.
- The Commissioner was asked if a lack of emphasis on rural crime had impacted on the ability to address County Lines. The Commissioner stated that rural crime and County Lines went hand in hand and rural crime would be an added focus as a result of Operation Remedy. The Panel reported that County Lines was an increasingly serious problem in Yeovil. In the absence of a specialist Drugs Squad within the Constabulary, the Commissioner was asked if the challenge would now be primarily addressed by the Regional Organised Crime Unit as opposed to the Neighbourhood Team. The Panel also sought clarification of any plans to engage with social providers to reduce the impact of “cuckooing” on vulnerable people targeted by criminals. The Commissioner stated that Operation Remedy would work with Neighbourhood Teams to upskill officers. It was reported that Police efforts in Yeovil had been seeing positive results but the introduction of another line was a setback. The Commissioner gave assurances that the Constabulary would use all powers and engage with local regional and national organisations to reduce the problem in Yeovil and other areas.
- Data Analytics was generally regarded as an exciting development. The Panel asked what the £30k savings in this area would be used for. The Commissioner highlighted the increasing need to share personal data to deal with knife crime and urged all partners where possible to accept this as a necessary move in support of a radical step change in protecting the vulnerable. It was recognised that Health was not straightforward with a number of barriers to the sharing of patient data within the healthcare system. The restrictions placed on a blanket sharing of information by the Information Commissioner was an added consideration.

12. Date of next Meeting

- 12th March 2019 10.30am (formal Panel Meeting, Weston Town Hall)

(The meeting ended at 1.25pm)

Chair

