

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2015 AT 1400 HOURS, COVENTRY

PRESENT:-

Cllr Mohammed Arif (Substitute) – Walsall
Cllr Rose Burley – Walsall
Cllr Ken Hawkins – Solihull – in the Chair
Cllr Diane Holl-Allen - Solihull
Cllr Ann Lucas – Coventry
Cllr John O’Shea (Substitute) – Birmingham
Cllr Paul Tilsley – Birmingham
Cllr Dave Tyler – Dudley
Nick Drew – Independent Member
Lionel Walker – Independent Member

ALSO PRESENT:

Sarah Norman - Chief Executive Dudley MBC / Panel Secretary
Emma Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Birmingham/ Panel Lead Officer
Benita Wishart – Group Scrutiny Manager
David Jamieson – West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner
Yvonne Mosquito – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner
Jonathan Jardine – Chief Executive for the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
Mark Kenyon – Chief Finance Officer for the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
Alethea Fuller – Partnerships and Engagement Manager Office of Police and Crime Commissioner
Dr Mashuq Ally – Head of Birmingham CSP
Isabel Merrifield – Head of Coventry CSP
Sue Hayward – Head of Dudley CSP
Gary Bowman – Sandwell CSP
Gill Crabbe – Head of Solihull CSP
Karen Samuels – Head of Wolverhampton CSP
Lynne Hughes – Head of Walsall CSP
Adrian Rush – Head of Walsall Drug and Alcohol Service

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 217 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Coventry City Council’s internet site (<http://www.coventry.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>). The Chair advised that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.
-

COUNCILLOR PHIL TOWNSEND

- 218 The Panel noted the death of Councillor Phil Townsend who had acted as Coventry City Council's named substitute on the Panel for two years and conveyed condolences to his family and colleagues.
-

APOLOGIES

- 219 Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of the following Panel Members:-
Councillors Bird (Walsall), Cooper (Sandwell) Leddy (Birmingham), Lowe (Dudley – substitute), Mattu (Wolverhampton), Rowley (Wolverhampton), Thompson (Birmingham) and Webb (Sandwell – substitute).
-

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 220 There were no declarations of interest.
-

MINUTES

- 221 Subject to the following changes, the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In Attendance: **ADD** Cllr John O'Shea.

Minute No.216: **CORRECTION FOLLOWING THE MEETING:** The PCC clarified that the current ethnic makeup of the West Midlands Police Force was 89.5% white and 10.5% BME.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 222 There were no public questions submitted to the meeting.
-

PANEL SCRUTINY OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY GRANTS

- 223 The following report setting out the remit of the Panel's mini scrutiny inquiry to look at the current community safety funding model and possible alternative approaches, together with the evidence received from the seven local Heads of Community Safety Partnership and the PCC was submitted:-

(See document No. 1)

The Chair welcomed the witnesses to the session. During the discussion the following points were made:-

The passporting of CSF grants to the seven districts was welcomed as it allowed them to meet local needs identified by the Local Police and Crime Boards and Strategic Assessments, as well as fund existing local provision and services.

Devolved funding gave districts the autonomy and flexibility to respond to local issues as they emerged.

Funding had enabled a combination of larger projects (such as Domestic Violence and CSE), as well as small localised work to be undertaken. Funds had also been used to fulfil statutory responsibilities (Domestic Homicide Reviews).

It was noted that there might be opportunities for more cross-border or sub-regional work as long as this did not replace the ability to commission local projects. The CSP Heads agreed that they could do more to identify regional priorities and examine what funding had been spent on across the region.

The point was made that for some projects, such as working with gangs or violence against women and girls it was crucial to be able to commission trusted and very localised service providers.

There was general agreement that current OPCC monitoring arrangements should be simplified. It was considered that particularly for smaller grants the quarterly monitoring requirements and bureaucracy were too onerous for commissioners and providers.

It was felt there should be greater focus on monitoring outcomes, rather than activities.

Some districts were reviewing their own performance framework to measure the impact of funding and ensure there was no duplication or double counting of projects funded from other sources. The point was made to be mindful of what the community safety funding was for and what should fall to other budget streams.

There was general agreement that the one year funding term made it difficult to plan. A longer term funding would allow for more efficient projects and maximise impact. Short term funding created challenges for employing staff and linking to other commissioned services, many of which were three year contracts. It was highlighted that any in-year changes to spending had to be agreed with the PCC and a request was made to give the districts greater flexibility to vire funds, within certain levels and to other activities in the agreed local plan, without the need to seek PCC approval to be able to respond quickly to emerging issues.

The meeting noted that the PCC was consulting on a 25% grant reduction for 2016/17. It was recognised that resources were limited and there would be less scope for new projects. Requests were made that any changes were phased in to manage staff reductions and exit strategies for projects.

The PCC joined the meeting and was given a summary of the key points. In response he explained that monitoring arrangements had been introduced following a previous underspend so that he could account to the public for every £1 spent. He did not think the quarterly monitoring process were too onerous, but undertook to look at how arrangements might be further simplified whilst still providing the reassurance that money was being spent in the agreed way.

With reference to the CSF grant reduction the PCC explained that the level of funding had remained constant for 3-4 years, but was now unsustainable in the current climate so he was looking at a 25% cut in line with police funding cuts. He acknowledged the criticism of the short term nature of the funding but pointed out that his budget allocation was on an annual basis so had limited scope to change this.

RESOLVED:-

That the Panel prepare a report with recommended principles for the Police and Crime Commissioner to consider when making a final decision on the arrangement for Community Safety Grants.

POLICE FUNDING: PANEL UPDATE 2016/17

- 224 The following report updating the Panel on the latest position in relation to the police funding settlement for 2016/ 17 and beyond was submitted:-

(See document No. 2)

The PCC circulated the following table comparing the central Government funding and Council Tax precept receipts in the 41 force areas:-

(See document No.3)

The PCC updated the Panel on recent developments with the police funding formula and efforts to address the imbalance for the West Midlands. He advised that on 15 October 2015 the revised police funding model had been withdrawn following uncertainty about the calculations and forces were working on the existing formula. The Autumn Statement on Wednesday 23rd November was expected to give PCCs greater flexibility to raise the precept level without triggering a referendum. Police funding allocations would not be announced until late December.

Panel Members observed that they were also waiting to hear of the impact of the Autumn Statement on local authority finances and remarked that councillors would face the blame for any rises in council tax bills.

The point was raised as to what the funding picture was for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service and whether they too should join PCC and West Midland's MPs campaign. It was noted that LGA was pushing of a bigger proportion on proceeds of crime money to be directed from the Treasury to local areas.

Referring to the table circulated, Members noted the West Midlands Force was the second most reliant on central government funding and so had the least ability to raise additional funds via the precept. Members noted that council tax receipts were dependent on the value of local housing, which was relatively low in the West Midlands compared to other areas of the country.

Responding to a question as to whether the PCC could set a different precept level for each of the seven districts, the PCC doubted he would be given that level of flexibility.

The PCC added that HMIC recently identified West Midlands Police as one of the top five efficient forces in the country. However this meant the cushion of further efficiency savings was limited.

In response to a question as to how changes to funding could impact on neighbourhood policing teams, particularly in view of the recent terror attacks, the PCC concurred that neighbourhood policing was a vital component of counter terrorism work in terms of gathering intelligence and providing localised advice. He assured the meeting that the West Midlands was always in a high state of readiness and counter terrorism unit funding was to increase and armed response resources were being reviewed.

The point was also raised that cuts to the number of PCSO posts could have a detrimental effect for gathering local intelligence and providing community reassurance. The PCC explained that the employment and deployment of officers was an operational decision. He spoke of the tough decisions that had to be made to balance the need for PCSO posts and police officers. He agreed to discuss neighbourhood policing plans in more detail at a future Panel meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- i) That the report and the PCC's update on police funding and ongoing discussions about possible changes to the precept referendum rules be noted; and
- ii) Neighbourhood Policing be added to the Panel Work Programme.

ESTATES CAPITAL BUDGET AND NEW WAYS OF WORKING

225 The following report setting out the latest position of the Estates Strategy was submitted:-

(See document No.4)

The PCC explained that the use of properties was an operational decision of the Chief Constable, but once he had declared a property surplus to requirement, it became the PCC's responsibility to dispose it. As part of the disposal process he sought local views on the future use of buildings to obtain the best value for its future use and the local community.

Members welcomed the involvement of local authorities on the future use of former police property as locations often made them suitable for co-location of public services.

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

CO-OPTED INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

- 226 The following report setting out the options for the recruitment of the co-opted independent members of the Police and Crime Panel when the term of office of the current members ended in May 2016, was submitted:-

(See document No.5)

Following a discussion as to either extend the terms of office, or proceed with an open and transparent recruitment exercise, it was

RESOLVED: -

- i) To carry out a selection process to recruit two independent panel members to be co-opted onto the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel from May 2016; and
 - ii) Establish a selection panel of Panel Members.
-

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER AND DEPUTY POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

- 227 The following report updating Members on the complaints made against the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner between 28 August 2014 and 31 October 2015 was submitted:-

(See document No.6)

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16 AND RECENT DECISIONS BY THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

- 228 The following report setting out the Panel's future work programme and meeting dates, together with the list of decisions published by the Police and Crime Commissioner since the last Panel meeting, was submitted:-

(See document No.7)

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

229 Monday 18 January 2015, Walsall Council House.

RETIREMENT OF CHIEF CONSTABLE CHRIS SIMMS

230 Members noted that Chief Constable Simms was to retire at the end of the year and discussed how that Panel might formally thank him for his service. Deputy PCC Yvonne Mosquito undertook to raise the matter with the PCC.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER ELECTIONS 2016

231 Members noted the announcement of an elected mayor for the West Midlands Combined Authority, and that this may have implications for the role of PCC. It was however noted that no official Government announcement on the PCC had been made.

Meeting ended at 1610 hours

.....
CHAIR