

Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 27 JUNE 2024 AT THE OLD FIRE STATION, THE ENTERPRISE NETWORK, 2 SALT LANE, SALISBURY, SP1 1DU.

Present:

Cllr Steve Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Junab Ali (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Stanka Adamcova, Cllr Vijay Manro, Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Ross Henning, Cllr George Jeans, Cllr Kelvin Nash, Cllr Tony Pickernell and Cllr Gordon King (Substitute)

Also Present:

Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil – Police and Crime Commissioner
Naji Darwish – Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, OPCC
Natasha Gell – Serious Violence Duty Coordinator, OPCC
Detective Superintendent Guy Elkins (Online)
Zara-Ann Prendergast – Strategic Communications Manager, OPCC
Matt Hitch – Democratic Services Officer, Wiltshire Council

36 Election of a Chairman

The Democratic Services Officer opened the meeting and called for nominations for the position of Chairman for the forthcoming year.

Cllr Tony Pickernell nominated Cllr Steve Bucknell, which was seconded by Cllr Kelvin Nash.

There were no further nominations.

Decision

To appoint Cllr Steve Bucknell as Chairman for 2024/25.

37 Election of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year.

Cllr Stanka Adamcova nominated Cllr Junab Ali, which was seconded by Cllr Abdul Amin.

There were no further nominations.

Decision

To appoint Cllr Junab Ali as Vice-Chairman for 2024/25.

38 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Dr Brian Mathew – substituted by Cllr Gordon King
- Louise Williams
- Denisa Ahmeti

The Chairman noted that Cllr Sudha Sri Nukana had been replaced on the Panel by the newly elected Vice-Chairman, Cllr Junab Ali. The Chairman thanked Cllr Sri Nukana for her work in supporting the Panel and welcomed the new Vice-Chairman.

It was also reported by the Chairman that Cllr Gayle Cook and Cllr Suresha Gattapur had been appointed as substitute members. Cllr Matthew Vallender and Cllr Jo Morris had been removed from the substitutes list. The Chairman congratulated the new substitutes on their appointment.

It was highlighted that Cllr Cook had planned to attend the meeting to gain an insight into the Panel's work but had sent her apologies that she was now unable to attend.

39 **Minutes and Matters Arising**

On the proposal of Cllr Abdul Amin, seconded by Cllr Vijay Manro, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2024 as a true and correct record.

40 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

41 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reported that Policing Minister Chris Philp had written a letter in response to the findings of the Home Affairs Select Committee's inquiry about the Police and Crime Commissioner model. He noted that the findings of the Committee had been circulated to the Panel, so they could consider any implications for their own work. It was possible that the Panel would look further at this issue if time allowed in their work schedule.

It was also highlighted by the Chairman that the Home Office had invited bids from local authorities hosting police and crime panels to set up and run a best practice hub. The proposals were reviewed by the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire Council, and he did not feel that the council was in a position to put in

a bid to host the hub. There was a very short bidding window and, if successful it would have involved employing three new staff on fixed contracts until March 2026.

The Democratic Services Officer confirmed that Swindon Borough Council would not have been eligible to host the hub as the bidding process was only open to host authorities.

42 **Public Participation**

The Chairman referred the Panel to the answer to a written question submitted by a Mr Paul Howlett available on pages 17 and 18 of the agenda pack.

43 **Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner on Key Issues**

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil, congratulated the Chairman on his re-election and stated that he felt reassured that their positive working relationship would continue. The PCC was pleased to report that Wiltshire Police had come out of the ENGAGE process, so was no longer in special measures. He explained that he had given a briefing to the oversight group from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), who had been reassured that the foundations for improvement were in place.

Cllr Ross Henning arrived at 10:39am.

The PCC took the opportunity to praise Chief Constable Catherine Roper and her senior leadership team for their work in restructuring and driving improvement in the force. The importance of drawing on the diverse experiences of staff in senior leadership positions was emphasised, including the new Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing and Specialist Operations, Ian Saunders, who had experience of policing in Northern Ireland and the Chief of Corporate Services, John Derryman, a former Head of Corporate Risk at HSBC.

However, the PCC noted that progress had been faster in some areas than others and that he was closely analysing data to avoid any flatlining of performance. He emphasised the importance of instilling a meritocratic culture, particularly in middle management, and expressed his confidence that the Chief Constable was implementing the necessary policies and procedures.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Panel thanked the PCC for his update and welcomed the news that Wiltshire Police had come out of the ENGAGE process.
- In response to a question about who had replaced John Derryman in coordinating Community Speed Watch (CSW) teams now he had changed role, it was explained that Perry Payne was heading up a multi-agency group called Wiltshire and Swindon Road Safety Partnership. In

addition, a member of staff, Colin, from the PCC's office was also helping to coordinate CSW teams.

- When asked about how he was tackling his key areas of focus, the PCC explained that his office had procedures to hold the Chief Constable and her team to account, including a formal monthly executive leadership meeting and informal fortnightly meetings. The PCC used these meetings to press the Chief Constable on how she was driving forward improvement in areas such as middle management.
- The Panel noted that they would welcome timescales for when improvements would be achieved so that they were better able to hold the PCC to account. They would adopt a critical approach to ensuring that the PCC delivered against his strategic objectives.
- The PCC explained that it was his goal to make Wiltshire Police an outstanding police force within two to three years. He was aiming for a process of continual improvement, so it was not possible to set a precise target date for becoming an outstanding force. The PCC noted that Wiltshire Police were ranked as the third worst performing force in the country three years ago and that they were now mid-range in terms of performance. He highlighted that getting out of special measures was a starting point towards further improvement.
- The Panel stressed the need not to over celebrate Wiltshire Police coming out of special measures, although some members did emphasise the importance of recognising achievement to congratulate officers and to drive standards throughout the organisation.
- When pressed further on when an improvement in culture would be delivered, the Chief Executive Officer of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC) Naji Darwish, highlighted that the Chief Constable had published a [three-year strategic plan](#) about tactical delivery for the PCC to scrutinise. He stated that appropriate governance arrangements were in place to ensure that the Chief Constable was held to account in implementing the plan. It was also highlighted that the Chief Constable intended to attend the Panel's meeting on 14 November.

44 **Police and Crime Plan Highlight and Performance Report**

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson OBE, MPhil, introduced a report, available on pages 19 to 38 of the agenda pack, outlining the progress made towards his Police and Crime Plan between April and June 2024.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Panel thanked the PCC for his report.
- In reply to questions about what he was doing to address response times to 999 and 101 calls, the PCC explained that supervisors were providing and receiving more extensive training than before and that he had invested in new technology to allow data to be transferred automatically. He also noted that a chief superintendent was managing the call centre, greater efforts were being made to improve staff retention and they were carrying out more dip monitoring of calls.

- The Panel noted that call response times were a key factor impacting confidence in the police and expressed frustration about the level of calls being abandoned. They passed on feedback from residents that had not reported crimes due to dissatisfaction with response times, so sought assurances that the PCC was pressuring the Chief Constable to ensure that this was a top priority.
- It was noted that there were concerns about reporting crime in all parts of Wiltshire but that this was particularly an issue in less affluent areas.
- The PCC reassured the Panel that he shared their concerns and that call times were the Chief Constable's top priority. He was applying pressure on the Chief Constable to do all she could to address the issue and was confident that she was doing the best she could with the available resources.
- The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Naji Darwish, reported that call times were better than 12 months ago. He explained that average talking time per call had increased, possibly indicating a greater level of confidence in police response, but that this was a contributory factor to waiting times. He also highlighted the resource constraints on the force.
- A member of the Panel reported that they had recently had cause to ring 999 twice and that the response had been excellent on both occasions, with officers arriving on the scene almost immediately.
- In reply to a query about whether the underlying issues with response times to 101 calls were due to staffing levels, the PCC stated that additional staff had now been recruited, so they were now fully staffed. He emphasised the need to balance resources, reporting that, with the exception of shoplifting, improvements had been made in tackling all types of crimes.
- The Chief Executive of the OPCC emphasised that efforts were being made to improve the health and wellbeing of call centre staff to improve staff retention. There had been improved line management, with daily meetings being held, anticipating resource challenges and exploring using additional sites where possible. He expected to see an improvement in call time responses by the Panel's meeting on 14 November.
- In response to queries about whether partnership work was being carried out effectively between agencies during the roll out of phase one of the Right Care, Right Person programme, an initiative to improve the multi-agency management of mental health demand, the PCC stated that it was, but the Chief Constable and he would be carrying out a review about how to better coordinate services. He reported that he would be meeting on a quarterly basis with the leaders and chief executives of both local authorities. In addition, he noted that the OPCC's Director of Operations, Rob Llewellyn, worked closely with the Community Safety Partnership executive groups in both Swindon and Wiltshire.
- The PCC explained that criminal acts were symptoms of underlying social and economic issues.

- The Chairman requested that he was invited to the quarterly meeting with the Leader of Wiltshire Council and the Vice-Chairman was invited to the PCC's meeting with the Leader of Swindon Borough Council.
- When asked whether the right risk assessments were in place in the Right Care, Right Person programme the Chief Executive of the OPCC explained that conversations had been held with partner agencies to ensure that the correct risk management systems were in place. He was pleased to report that no significant concerns had been raised by partners and that updates had been provided to Wiltshire's Health and Wellbeing Board. He explained that, in Wiltshire, the programme was being implemented in two distinct phases. The second phase of the programme would include the transportation of mental health patients, which would require deep cooperation with South Western Ambulance Service. Whilst he recognised that there would be challenges in implementing the second phase of the new system, he was also optimistic that it had the potential to free up resources to focus on core policing tasks. The implementation of the programme was being overseen by a multi-agency group.
- The Panel requested a written response with further information about Right Care, Right Person and the approach to mental health support.
- A member of the Panel raised concerns about Wiltshire Police's response to a series of incidents where an individual who was struggling with their mental health had threatened a resident. The Chief Executive of the OPCC noted that the police would be guided by the agreements with partners. The police responded when a serious threat to life required it, but people experiencing mental health crisis should be seen by health professionals not police officers.
- The PCC emphasised that Wiltshire Police liaised with partners to establish which was the most appropriate agency to respond to a particular incident. He recognised that there would be cases where improvements could be made, so stressed that it was important to maintain oversight.
- Details were sought about how the warden patrols, funded through the £1 million Hotspot Response Fund would operate. The Chief Executive of the OPCC explained that the fund was split roughly in half to support additional high visibility patrols and work with local councils, such as in Salisbury and Trowbridge. Details of where the additional patrols took place would be provided to the Home Office. Extra work had been carried out to engage with Trowbridge Town Council to ensure that they had been fully consulted with.
- The PCC noted that the Home Office set strict conditions about how grant funding was to be spent but explained that there was a degree of local autonomy.
- When asked about why a warden scheme was not being implemented in smaller market towns, or suburban areas of Swindon, on Friday and Saturday nights, the Chief Executive of the OPCC stated that information about where the additional resources were being deployed could be provided.

- Information was sought about why there had not been a reduction in police response times. The PCC stated that tweaks were being made to the operating model to improve clarity around tasking, including improving oversight and better utilising data. It was confirmed that less urban areas tended to have longer response times, although steps were being taken to address this imbalance.

45 **Police and Crime 2024-29 Plan Development**

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil, introduced a report, on pages 39 to 42 of the agenda pack, outlining the proposed timeline for developing his new Police and Crime Plan, as well as the opportunities for feedback from stakeholders.

It was explained by the PCC that his Crime Plan would be informed by a wide and deep consultation with residents, as well as the Chief Constable's operational advice. He reported that he would continue to provide comprehensive oversight on behalf of the public and felt that his new plan would help the public hold him to account. He was confident that Wiltshire Police were operating more effectively than when he wrote his existing Police and Crime Plan, enabling him to be more precise in defining output and outcomes in his forthcoming plan.

- The Panel thanked the PCC for his report.
- The PCC was on no fewer than 11 WhatsApp group chats with different community groups to get feedback about what they felt were the threats they were facing.
- The PCC reported that he would receive a report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in August detailing their expectations of Wiltshire Police now they had come out of the ENGAGE process. Once the Chief Constable and he had received the detailed findings from HMICFRS, the PCC would ask the Chief Constable for a detailed plan about how she intended to address the issues identified.
- Further details were sought about the engagement opportunities that there would be for partner organisations. The PCC explained that he would consult with as many agencies and individuals as possible, including at political, strategic, and local level. Assurance was provided that his plan would be predicated on the concerns of Wiltshire's residents.
- The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Naji Darwish, noted that they would engage with all partners formally and informally to ensure that they had input into the Crime Plan.

At the conclusion of the discussion, on the proposal of Cllr Abdul Amin, seconded by Cllr Vijay Manro, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To note the proposal and timescales for developing a new Police and Crime Plan as well as the opportunities for feedback by the public, stakeholders and partners.

46 **Serious Violence Duty and Serious Violence Partnership Work**

Natasha Gell, Serious Violence Duty Coordinator, delivered a presentation about the work going on to prevent and reduce serious violence in Wiltshire. She provided background information about the programme and set out the key performance indicators stipulated by the Home Office. Key points included:

- Serious Violence Duty was implemented in 2023 to meet a legal obligation for different agencies, such as the police, local authorities and health providers, within a police force area, to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence.
- Wiltshire and Swindon's strategy adopted the World Health Organisation's definition of serious violence and had a particular focus on gang violence and knife crime.
- At the heart of the strategy was a public health approach to violence reduction which was evidence led and focussed on cooperation and early intervention. It adopted a trauma informed approach.
- There were 362 knife crime offences between September 2022 and August 2023, meaning that Wiltshire had the fifth lowest levels of knife crime of any police force area during that period.
- There was a big difference between perception and reality about the number of young people carrying knives. The 2022 Wiltshire School Survey found that three percent of children surveyed said that they carried a knife whereas they believed that 19 percent of their peers were carrying knives.
- Delivery of the Serious Violence Duty was overseen by a joint steering group, which met with the executive boards of community safety partnerships on a quarterly basis. The steering group had oversight of the Serious Violence Duty Grant, approximately £255,000 in 2023/24.
- Projects funded in 2023/24 included a food truck for Swindon Youth Justice Service and the WAY Beacons project at Great Western Hospital, which had helped 66 young people with the aim of breaking the cycle to hospital readmission.
- The Focussed Deterrence project had been implemented in Devizes targeting 12 young people through education to help them make safer choices, four of which had signed up.
- Additional funding had been allocated to community safety partnerships in both local authorities leading to an improvement and engagement. They had been invited to pitch ideas to the joint steering group for funding.

Detective Superintendent Guy Elkins, Swindon Hub Commander, delivered an online presentation about knife crime. Points included:

- There had been fewer crimes involving knives and blades in April 2024 than in April 2023 in both Swindon and Wiltshire.
- There had been a noticeable decline in public order offences involving brandishing a knife in public.
- There had been 28 fewer robberies involving a knife or blade in the year to April 2024 than in the preceding year.
- Wiltshire had the sixth lowest number of offences involving knives or blades per capita of any police force area and it was Wiltshire Police's aspiration to have the lowest.
- Intelligence was reviewed on a daily basis to identify individuals suspected of carrying a knife and hotspot areas where knives were thought to be present.
- Wiltshire Police had a strong relationship with Crimestoppers and engaged with their Fearless campaign in schools.
- Several preventative measures had been put in place including knife bins. Neighbourhood police teams were working with parents to provide support. Peer advocates, who had experience of the youth justice system, were also used to provide advice and had played an important preventative role.
- A strategic approach was being adopted to improve networking and discuss support programmes for individuals.
- Section 60 powers could be authorised to allow stop and search in a specific area without reasonable grounds, although it was very rare that this had to be used.
- There had been an increase in the number of Child Abduction Warning Notices to minimise the exploitation of children in knife crime.
- Knife crime kept the Detective Superintendent awake at night.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- The Panel thanked the Serious Violence Duty Coordinator and Detective Superintendent for their presentations and for their work in tackling knife crime and serious violence.
- The Focussed Deterrence programme in Devizes worked with a small group of individuals supported by Wiltshire Council.
- It was noted that stop and search statistics would not routinely come to the Panel as that was tactical information. However, if specific concerns arose about knife crime relevant information could be provided. Information about stop and search was on the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (OPCC's) [website](#).
- Further details were sought about engagement with secondary schools, as it was noted that links with primary schools were better established in some areas. The Detective Superintendent explained that he was working with secondary schools in Swindon and discussions were taking place about how to cooperate more deeply on the issue of knife crime. He had been working with secondary schools on school exclusions and had a list of all children in Swindon that had been excluded from school.

- In response to a query about why the presentations had focussed more on younger than older people, it was explained that the Serious Violence Duty programme did not include domestic violence in its statistics as those were targeted separately. Domestic offences were primarily perpetrated by people from older age groups whereas public order offences, including gang violence, were mainly committed by young people. However, the Serious Violence Duty Coordinator explained that domestic abuse was often a precursor to public order offences and noted that they worked closely with domestic abuse partnerships.
- There was no evidence to suggest that efforts to target knife crime in Swindon had displaced knife crime into the surrounding areas, such as Royal Wootton Bassett.
- When asked about the effectiveness of online compared to face-to-face support, the Chief Executive of the OPCC, Naji Darwish, explained that it would depend on the individual and clarified that young people that had committed serious criminality would each have a dedicated youth worker. The Serious Violence Duty Coordinator emphasised the importance of building trusted relationships and highlighted that many young people that carried knives did not have a trusting relationship with an adult.
- There were no plans for neighbourhood police teams to visit mosques to reassure women that wore niqabs and burqas about their rights in relation to the use of stop and search powers.
- The Chief Executive of the OPCC explained that Serious Violence Duty was a key part of the convening role that the OPCC played in bringing together partner agencies to tackle crime.
- Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil praised the work being carried out to tackle knife crime and the Serious Violence Duty. He stated that he slept more easily at night knowing that someone like Detective Superintendent Elkins was tackling the issue.

47 **Forward Work Plan**

The Panel noted their forward work plan. It was highlighted that an update on antisocial behaviour would be provided at the next meeting on 26 September and that Chief Constable Catherine Roper planned to attend the Panel's meeting on 14 November.

48 **Communications**

The Chairman reminded that Panel that their annual report had been presented to Wiltshire Council's Full Council meeting on 21 May and was also available on Wiltshire Council's website. In addition, it was planned to present the report at Swindon Borough Council's Full Council meeting on 25 July.

It was requested that the Democratic Services Officer email the report to the Swindon Borough Council councillors on the Panel in advance of 25 July.

49 **Commissioner's Questions**

The Chairman asked for an update on the Panel's request to shadow Wiltshire Police for a day to gain an appreciation of the issues that they faced on the frontline. Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil, reported that he had raised the issue with officers and would make further enquiries. The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Naji Darwish, said that he would look at opportunities for members of the Panel to attend relevant scrutiny groups and attend public engagement events.

Cllr Vijay Manro and Cllr Gordon King left the meeting at 12:30pm.

In response to a query about the impact of proposals from the Ministry of Justice for early prisoner release, the Chief Executive of the OPCC confirmed that the issue had been discussed by the National Police Chiefs' Council and was being worked on at a national and local level. He noted that the Panel would receive an update on reducing reoffending at their November meeting.

The Panel requested an update on the progress towards plans for a new policing hub in the south of the county. The PCC explained that two sites were under consideration, one at Old Sarum and one at High Post, an industrial site between Salisbury and Amesbury. The PCC was waiting for planning permission to be granted at both sites before taking a decision on the final location. The Chief Executive of the OPCC reported that a planning application had been rejected at High Post but that a fresh planning application would be submitted. He highlighted that there were issues with the allocation of land for business purposes in the south of the county in Wiltshire's emerging Local Plan. The Chairman offered to make enquiries to see what could be done to speed up the planning process.

In response to a query about the visibility of neighbourhood teams, the PCC explained that the Chief Constable was keeping the operational model under review. He stressed the importance of a central operational function to ensure the appropriate geographical distribution of officers at any one time. He reported that he had also asked Chief Constable Roper questions about the advertising of the front desk service at police stations. It was noted that Tidworth Police Station did not have a front desk but did have a 'phone to contact the neighbourhood team.

The Panel noted that they would welcome greater continuity in staffing within neighbourhood teams to enable stronger links to be built with local communities. In response, the PCC stated that he agreed that having consistency was important to develop long term relationships and reassured the Panel that he was pushing hard for improved staff retention.

50 **Future Meeting Dates**

Future meeting dates were confirmed as:

Thursday 26 September 2024, 1:30pm, Swindon Borough Council Offices

Thursday 14 November 2024, 10:30am
Thursday 16 January 2025, 10:30am
Wednesday 5 February 2025, 10:30am
Wednesday 26 March 2025, 10:30am

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 12.40 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Matt Hitch of Democratic Services,
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