

Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2023 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Steve Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Ross Henning, Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Daniel Cave, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Tony Pickernell and Denisa Ahmeti

Also Present:

Cllr Paul Oatway QPM
Nicki Alberry – Independent Member – Shortlisting and Interview Panel
Philip Wilkinson – Police and Crime Commissioner
Naji Darwish – Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, OPCC
Emma Morton – OPCC

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr James Sheppard – Wiltshire Council, Cllr Kevin Parry – Swindon Borough Council, Cllr Carol Shelley – Swindon Borough Council, Cllr Jenny Jefferies – Swindon Borough Council and Louise Williams – Co-Opted Independent member.

The Chairman reported the sad news that Cllr Jenny Jefferies' husband had recently passed away, and he would send her a letter of condolence on behalf of the Committee.

2 Minutes and matters arising

Decision:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to minute 96 being amended to reflect that a response to a public question had been sent to Mr Caswill following the last Panel meeting rather than before the meeting.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman thanked Mr Caswill for his recent correspondence highlighting a number of areas where the Panel had not been complying with the spirit of the procedure rules and arrangements set out in Protocol 12 for the Police and Crime Panel. This matter would be considered further, and the Panel were updated on the action taken.

5 **Public Participation**

The Panel received questions from Mr Chris Caswill which received responses prior to the meeting and were published on the Council's website [here](#) in a supplementary agenda pack.

In addition, Mr Caswill read out a statement in relation to his concerns about how the Panel functioned. The Chairman thanked Mr Caswill for raising some important issues and explained that the Panel had been and would continue to be rigorous in its questioning of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Chairman confirmed that the issues discussed at the last meeting with the press and public excluded were indeed very sensitive and not for public consumption. Going forward, he assured Mr Caswill that there would be more transparency where possible and a standard item would be included on all future agenda in relation to communications.

A statement was read out by Paul Sunners – Chairman of Wiltshire NHW Association about responding to local communities' concerns by the PCC. The PCC highlighted his efforts to attend community meetings including Area Board meetings, although he indicated that it was not always possible to attend all Parish Council meetings. In this instance he provided updates of activity for Parish Council magazines.

6 **PCC Budget 2023/24 and MTFS**

The Panel considered a report and received a presentation from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer (CFO) Clive Barker. The report provided detail about the draft budget and precept along with the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy which estimated the financial position over the next 4 financial years.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) informed the Panel that he had written to the Home Secretary about the Police Funding Formula highlighting how Wiltshire Constabulary was under-funded by £12m when compared to other Police Forces. It was noted that in the absence of a fair funding settlement there was a requirement to unlock resources to invest in priorities or continue to provide services at the current level. The Panel noted that the PCC had been appointed to the National Strategic Board for NPAS (Air Support) and he was looking at improving efficiency in this area.

The CFO introduced the report and provided a comprehensive presentation highlighting the following areas of interest:

- The high level national picture
- The Wiltshire funding mix
- The Wiltshire context
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- The immediate concern – 2023-24 budget
- Why the essential growth
- Balancing the budget
- How the budget is balanced in the MTFS
- Staffing
- Capital
- The impact of a precept lower than £15
- The next steps

The PCC and CFO then received a number of comments and questions from the Panel about the impact on the residents in Wiltshire of the proposed increase in precept of £15 for a Band D household, the impact of the recent PEEL inspection and association with current funding, detail about the capital grant and how this would be implemented, historical precept increases, and the initial feedback received on the precept consultation.

In response to the above comments and questions the PCC and CFO explained that if the precept increase was lower than the £15 the increase would be lower than that reported by the Home Office. Due to Uplift Grant being related directly to Police Officer numbers (so Police Office Numbers cannot reduce) there would be increased pressure on all other budgets. The PCC indicated that there were limited areas where savings could be generated, however it would be very difficult to justify underfunding issues with the Home Office if a lower precept was approved. It was confirmed that other Constabularies were also proposing a £15 precept, that it was very unlikely that other PCCs would undertake a referendum on this. There is a £5m Legacy Council Tax Grant which has remained frozen for a number of years. The main revenue grant can be allocated to revenue or capital spend. Current feedback from the consultation was positive overall with many comments supporting the proposed increase in precept.

The Chairman thanked the PCC and CFO for their presentation and responses to questions.

Decision:

That the Panel note the report and presentation, and the current thinking surrounding the 2023-24 precept, that a £15 Band D increase per household per year is appropriate and it is the intention to consult the public on this.

7 **Confirmation of Chief Constable**

The Panel considered the report of the PCC & the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Wiltshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which provided notification of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) preferred candidate for the role of Chief Constable for Wiltshire Police and seeking confirmation of the proposed appointment by the Panel, as required by the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

The PCC introduced the report and informed the Panel of the recruitment process undertaken. The PCC outlined the rigorous process outlined in the report and the roles of the Chief Executive and independent member on fairness, transparency and merit. He confirmed that Catherine Roper performed to an excellent standard throughout the application and assessment process, and it was the unanimous view of the Panel that she held the skills, abilities and qualities required to lead Wiltshire Police.

The Panel also heard from Nicki Alberry, the independent member, about her role in the recruitment process. The Independent Member considered that the appointment process had been conducted fairly, openly and based on merit. She thanked the PCC and Chief Executive for their role in the process and support offered to the recruitment panel.

Catherine Roper, preferred candidate, introduced herself to the Panel and responded to a number of questions about the impact of the PEEL inspection report and necessary action required to improve Wiltshire Police, time commitment to the role of Chief Constable, experience of improving the performance of a failing organisation, how the preferred candidate would adapt to leading a rural force compared to an inner city force, the number one achievement at the end of her tenure and how she intends on communicating with local communities.

Decision:

That the Police and Crime Panel supports Catherine Roper as the confirmed candidate to the role of Chief Constable for Wiltshire police.

8 **Future meeting dates**

The Panel were reminded that a visit to Police HQ in Devizes had been organised for Panel members on 17 January 2023 and a timetable of events for the day had previously been circulated.

The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be on Thursday 2 February 2023 at Monkton Park Offices, Chippenham.

The following future meeting dates were noted:

- Thursday 9 March 2023 - Salisbury Guildhall, Guildhall Square, Salisbury

- Thursday June 2023 – Date and venue to be confirmed
- Thursday 14 September 2023 - Venue to be confirmed
- Thursday 14 December 2023 - Venue to be confirmed

9 **Close**

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

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