

Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Steve Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Stanka Adamcova (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Sudha Sri Nukana, Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Ross Henning, Cllr George Jeans, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew, Cllr Tony Pickernell, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Denisa Ahmeti and Louise Williams

Also Present:

Philip Wilkinson OBE, MPhil – Police and Crime Commissioner
Naji Darwish – Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, OPCC
John Derryman – Strategic Planning and Performance Officer, OPCC
Emma Morton – Head of Communications and Engagement, OPCC
Michael O'Connor – Youth and Community Transformation Officer, Swindon BC
Jen Murray - Contextual Safeguarding Practice Lead, Wiltshire Council
James Biggs - National Referral Mechanism Co-ordinator, Wiltshire and Swindon
Matt Hitch – Democratic Services Officer, Wiltshire Council

17 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr James Sheppard
- Cllr Vijay Manro

18 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

19 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Sudha Sri Nukana to Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel ('the Panel'). Cllr Sri Nukana had been approved as the replacement for Cllr Jim Grant at the Full Council meeting of Swindon Borough Council on 13 July 2023.

20 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

21 **Minutes and Matters Arising**

In a matter arising from the previous meeting, Cllr Ros Henning questioned Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson, OBE MPhil about the Safer Streets Fund and whether it was additional money. In response, the Commissioner noted that the money was additional but that the amount going forward would be reduced due to the need to fund the pay settlement in the force.

Cllr Sudha Sri Nukana arrived at 10:41am.

Cllr George Jeans noted that his question about Councillors being able to report crimes without going through the 101-call process had not been recorded in the minutes of the previous meeting. It was agreed that Cllr Jeans would repeat his question so that the answer could be recorded in the minutes of this, 14 September, meeting.

On the proposal of Cllr Henning, seconded by Cllr Tony Pickernell, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2023 as a true and correct record.

22 Wiltshire and Swindon Youth Justice Services

Michael O'Connor, Youth and Community Transformation Officer at Swindon Borough Council, delivered a presentation about the strategic priorities, and model of practice of the Youth Justice Service in Swindon. The Transformation Officer spoke about the close working relationship with the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPCC) being a key part of their success and noted that Swindon Borough Council was seen as running one of the best Youth Justice services in the country.

Key priorities for the service included deterring poor behaviour, focusing on the children as being children, rather than juveniles, and reducing the use of custody. He highlighted that children not in education, employment or training (NEET) tended to have the high rates in custody but was pleased to report that in the final quarter of 2022 there were no NEET children in custody from Swindon.

Jen Murray, Contextual Safeguarding Practice Lead at Wiltshire Council, then gave a brief overview of their work, explaining that it was about understanding the extrafamilial risks faced by children and young people. She noted that Wiltshire was a pilot area for a scheme to protect children outside of the home. She stressed that they adopted a multi-agency approach, holding regular meetings between different agencies and working with individuals that often interacted with young people, including taxi drivers and librarians. To illustrate the value work that was going on, she shared a case study from Devizes where peer group assessment had been used to enhance services.

James Biggs, National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Co-ordinator for Wiltshire and Swindon, explained that an NRM Panel had been established to help the victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. It was one of 20 such pilot studies being undertaken in the UK, where many children were referred to the NRM Panel, rather than to the Single Competent Authority in the Home Office. The NRM Panel comprised experts from the police, children's services and health authorities. Its role included deciding whether there were reasonable, or conclusive, grounds to suspect that a young person was a victim of modern slavery.

During the discussion, key points included:

- The Police and Crime Panel thanked the officers for their updates and praised the positive work being carried out in the Youth Justice System, including their work on early intervention.
- The NRM Co-ordinator stated that cross border contextual safeguarding meetings were held with Local Authorities in Avon and Somerset and Devon.
- The NRM had received 14 referrals to date, 10 from Wiltshire and four from Swindon. The five children where there were conclusive grounds that they were victims of modern slavery all came from Wiltshire, four of which were referred by Wiltshire Council and one by Wiltshire Police.
- The NRM Pilot study started in 2021 and was funded until at least March 2024.
- The Youth and Community Transformation Officer at Swindon Borough Council explained that the five Ps approach was used to help identify why individuals committed certain crimes. He noted that his team worked with between 30 and 60 children at a time. Wiltshire Council were currently working with 124 children in the Youth Justice System.
- In response to a query about whether a more cohesive youth service would reduce offending rates, officers noted that it was not possible to quantify but did emphasise the importance of early intervention.
- It was noted that the Court Disposal Scrutiny Panel would welcome the regular attendance of a representative from the Youth Justice Service.
- The Youth and Community Transformation Officer highlighted that support was key to try to reduce reoffending rates. He said that there was a need to work with families and connect better with vulnerable children than criminals were able to.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner praised the work being done by different agencies across the Youth Justice System. He stated that the Chief Constable and he were working strongly on out of court resolutions and spoke about the importance of not stigmatising young people.

Please see Agenda Supplement 2 for further information.

The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) provided an overview of the progress made towards the addressing the findings of a Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). He was pleased to report that there had been improvement in a number of key areas and felt that the ENGAGE process, the monitoring period following the inspection, had helped to stabilise the performance of Wiltshire Police. He reported that The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and he had met with HMICFRS the previous day and that they all wanted to see sustained improvement over the longer term. He also underlined that the PCC saw the requirements of the ENGAGE process as only part of the improvements required throughout the force. He identified the response time to answering 'phone calls as a perennial challenge and emphasised that they were taking steps to address the issue. He also noted that the OPCC's Strategic Planning and Performance Officer was conducting extensive work to oversee management and accountability, as well as efforts to improve morale, within the force.

During the discussion, points included:

- It was noted that the OPCC did not feel that it was prudent to approach HMICFRS to sign off its recommendations on PEEL until there had been at least six months of sustained improvement. In response to a query about when the six months would start, the Chief Executive explained that this would be performance related and clarified that they would not be satisfied after only seeing a short period of improved performance.
- It was noted that ENGAGE was a special measure status and coming out of this would mean that the force was not classified as being at immediate risk.
- The PCC stated that he thought that Wiltshire Police would be getting close to being rated as adequate at their next PEEL inspection in March 2024. However, he cautioned against over-celebrating if Wiltshire Police were to leave the ENGAGE process. He stressed that he would rather see Wiltshire Police remain in ENGAGE to address changes rather than improvement followed by complacency culture returning.
- When asked about what was being done to improve how crime could be reported and whether the measures put in place had been satisfactory, the PCC stated that he was not satisfied with the progress made. He noted that a Chief Super Intendent had been put in charge of Wiltshire Police's call control centre and that his office was supporting the Chief Constable to drive improvement.
- A query was asked about community policing and whether crimes could be reported through Town Council Clerks or Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). It was also queried whether Councillors could have a quicker route to contact the police about crimes in their area. In response, the PCC emphasised that community engagement was the first priority in his Crime Plan and outlined some of the measures that had been put in place. He reported that Wiltshire Police had recruited an additional 162 officers and a new IT system had been introduced to allow officers to manage investigations on their 'phones rather than having to

return to their office. Furthermore, CCTV vans had been refurbished and were assisting with engagement activities. He also reassured Councillors that they were welcome to contact his office directly if they had any specific concerns.

- When asked whether crime reporting had to be either online, or via 101/999, the PCC clarified that the public could talk to officers on the ground. He did express frustration about the length of time that was required to complete an online form to report crimes but noted that it was a national form, and he would apply pressure to the Home Office to try to reform it.
- The attendance of Police Inspectors at Area Boards was welcomed, and it was queried whether Councillors could be provided with a list of contacts for officers in their areas. The PCC noted that lists of officers were included in the packs sent to Area Boards and reported that the Chief Constable was also keen to attend their meetings.
- Further information was sought about reports that Wiltshire Police was reducing the number of mental health incidents that it attended. The PCC confirmed that his office funded round the clock mental health nurses, and they were focussing on a 'right case right person' response. He noted that there were efforts to reduce the amount of time that police officers spent sitting in hospital with patients given that they were not always the best placed agency to provide support. However, he was keen to stress that there would be a gradual negotiated transfer of responsibility. The Chief Executive of the OPCC added that they were working closely with the local Integrated Care Board on a transition plan. He highlighted a successful transition that had taken place in Humberside that had delivered clear benefits and was implemented over a two-to-three-year period.
- It was noted that the Bluebell mental health service was not the responsibility of the OPCC, but of health commissioners.

On the proposal of Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, seconded by Cllr Ros Henning, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To note the report on the OPCC's oversight of Wiltshire Police's PEEL progress.

24 Police and Crime Plan Highlight and Performance Report

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) gave a brief presentation about the achievements towards, and issues associated with, the delivery of his Crime Plan between June and September 2023. He identified what he saw as deep seated, overlapping, legacy issues impacting the force such as morale and infrastructure challenges, before outlining the steps he was taking to address them. Key points included:

- The new police station in Tidworth would open on schedule.
- Four different options for a new station in Salisbury were being considered.
- Morale in Wiltshire Police was still an area where improvements could be made.
- There had been challenges with staffing levels, due to too many officers being granted leave simultaneously. The Chief Constable was taking steps to ensure that staffing level regulations were now being enforced more robustly.
- A new learning and development training facility was receiving positive feedback.
- Key achievements included a reduction in the number of rape and sexual offences, as well as achieving the most County Line disruptions per head of population of any force in the country.
- A more coherent approach to anti-social behaviour was being adopted, including through better coordination with partner agencies and the development of a toolkit to tackle its causes, symptoms and consequences.
- Information from Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) was being used more effectively and speed enforcement activity in 2023 was more than double that had taken place in 2022.
- The PCC had signed off on Operation Ragwort to tackle organised crime gangs involved in rural crime. He was also working with other West Country PCCs to build a more coherent intelligence picture.
- The PCC was keen for his office to continue to support the Criminal Justice Sector to improve the experience for victims and witnesses.

During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- The Panel thanked the PCC for his presentation and noted the progress made towards the Crime Plan over the last quarter.
- It was clarified that a national measurement was used to assess County Line disruptions.
- In response to a query about what could be done to tackle anti-social driving habits, such as noisy cars, or those modified to generate extra speed, the PCC noted that the Road Policing Unit had been enlarged. He would ask Community Police Teams how they were tackling the issue of noisy cars and his instinct was to be as proactive as possible.
- When asked about why the volume of Speed Watch records in June 2023 was 44.4 percent lower than in June 2022, the Strategic Planning and Performance Officer at the OPCC explained that this was due to a combination of seasonal factors, changes in the team and increases in the number of volunteers. He noted that the PCC and he received an average of five emails per day about enforcement activity from volunteers.
- Further information was sought about whether the PCC thought that the force's hierarchical structure encouraged first class behaviour from all

staff and whether they had a culture that encouraged officers to go above and beyond. The PCC responded by saying that he felt Wiltshire Police was too risk averse when he took over but there was now a sharper chain of command in place. He agreed that it was important to be proactive.

- The PCC reiterated his concerns about the value for money that Wiltshire Police received from the National Police Air Service (NPAS). He stated that he had written to the policing minister three times about the issue and also shared a critical report with him. He noted that 75 percent of the governance board on NPAS needed to support any funding changes, so he might ask the Police and Crime Panel for their political support in lobbying government for reform.
- Some members of the Panel expressed frustration that certain issues were persisting within Wiltshire Police and stated that they would welcome a faster pace of change.

25 **PCC Annual Report 2022/23**

The Panel had the opportunity to provide recommendations on the draft version of the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Annual Report, available in Agenda Supplement 1. Discussion of the draft report and comments by members of the Panel are listed below:

- The Panel praised the honesty in the draft report and gave thanks to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for their hard work in producing it.
- The Panel thanked the PCC for the level of detail in the report about the reforms that the Chief Constable and he had implemented. Some members stated that they would welcome further detail about the impacts of those reforms. They also recognised that there was often a lag between the implementation of reforms and the time that they took to take effect.
- Requests were made for more information about the PCC's view of the funding for Wiltshire Police, as well as details of the lobbying that he had undertaken for increased funding, to be included in the report.
- The PCC stated that he had spoken to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen MP and written to Policing Minister, Chris Philp MP regarding the Police Funding Formula, as Wiltshire was the second worst funded force per head of population in the country.
- Clarity was sought about the other costs and contracted services listed on the final page of the draft report. The Chief Executive of the OPCC clarified that other costs could include items such as running costs of maintaining the police estate. There were a variety of contracted services including forensics, policing provision, custody, healthcare and contributions to the National Police Air Service.

- When asked about the level of pension contributions, it was confirmed that the figure was only the direct cost paid by Wiltshire Police as the employer.
- Further queries were asked about how the impact of commissioned services was measured. It was observed that the outcomes were reported to the Quarterly Performance Board and the PCC was briefed on each portfolio. An annual report is presented to the Panel at their March meetings.

It was noted that a final version of the report would be circulated to Panel Members and published following a review of the recommendations from the Panel.

On the proposal of Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, seconded by Cllr Ros Henning, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To note the Police and Crime Commissioner's draft Annual Report.

26 **Communications**

The Democratic Services Officer reported that the Panel's rules of procedure and arrangements approved at their previous meeting, on 13 June, had been ratified by Swindon Borough Council at their Full Council meeting on 13 July. The documents were still awaiting final approval from Wiltshire Council and were expected to be considered at their Full Council meeting on 17 October. If the documents were approved, it would bring the Panel's public participation deadlines in line with other committees at Wiltshire Council.

It was also noted by the Democratic Services Officer that a briefing note about the recent work of the Panel was being prepared, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, to be circulated to members of both councils.

In addition, the possibility of the Panel streaming its meetings online was discussed. It was highlighted that not all of the Panel's regular venues were capable of supporting live streaming. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman would hold discussions with officers about achieving the best balance of venues and would seek views from the Panel at the next meeting. The Democratic Services Officer added that decisions about venues were ultimately a decision for officers, in consultation with the Chairman. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner stated that they had no objection in principle to broadcasting and it was noted that parts of the meetings could be held in private if confidential material needed to be considered.

27 **Forward Work Plan**

The Panel were reminded that they had agreed three topics on which they would most like to receive updates from the Office of the Police and Crime

Commissioner. The Police and Crime Commissioner noted that the next briefing would be on Neighbourhood Policing.

On the proposal of Cllr Ros Henning, seconded by Cllr Sudha Sri Nukana, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To note the forward work plan.

28 **Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be on Thursday 14 December at 10:30am in Committee Room 6 at Swindon Borough Council Offices.

Future meeting dates were:

- Thursday 18 January 2024, 10:30am
- Thursday 8 February 2024, 10:30am
- Thursday 7 March 2024, 10:30am
- Thursday 27 June 2024, 10:30am
- Thursday 26 September 2024, 1:30pm
- Thursday 14 November 2024, 10:30am

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.35 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Matt Hitch of Democratic Services, direct line , e-mail matthew.hitch@wiltshire.gov.uk

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