

Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2023 AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM SN15 1ER.

Present:

Cllr Steve Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Jenny Jeffries (Vice-Chairman),
Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Elizabeth Threlfall, Cllr Carol Shelley, Cllr Ross Henning,
Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Daniel Cave, Cllr Dr Brian Mathew and Cllr Tony Pickernell

Also Present:

Philip Wilkinson, OBE – Police and Crime Commissioner
Naji Darwish – Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, OPCC
Clive Baker – Chief Financial Officer, OPCC
Cameron Osborn – Apprentice Democratic Services Officer
Matt Hitch – Democratic Services Officer

10 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Kevin Parry (Swindon Borough Council)
- Louise Williams (Co-Opted Independent Member)
- Denisa Ahmeti (Co-Opted Independent Member)
- Chief Constable Kier Pritchard (Wiltshire Police)

11 **Minutes and matters arising**

On the proposal of Cllr Sheppard, seconded by Cllr Amin, it was resolved:

Decision

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

13 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

14 **Public Participation**

The Chairman stated that he was keen to improve the public communications of the Panel and welcomed questions related to its responsibility and functions. It was noted that a question had been submitted by a member of the public and that the response had been published in Agenda Supplement 1.

The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) confirmed that the PCC's response to the Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) report was included on their website. For the benefit of the public, he also noted that a comprehensive update had been provided to the Panel. The update had been behind closed doors due to the need to protect confidential information.

15 **PCC Precept Proposal 2023/24 and Budget**

The Panel considered a report from the PCC's Chief Financial Officer about proposed changes to the precept for the financial year 2023-24. The officer noted that, if the precept was increased by lower than the amount recommended in the report, it would be likely to require a high rate of increase in future years in order to improve service levels.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Chief Financial Officer was thanked for the update and for the recommendations in his report.
- The officer was pleased to update the Panel that £171,000 of additional funding had become available since he presented his Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at their January meeting, due to a surplus in the estimated council tax base. However, he was keen to stress that a surplus of this size was unlikely to be repeated in future years and that population changes were built into his forecasts. The extra £171,000 for 2023-24 would be used to help mitigate inflationary pressures.
- He also noted that the government had recently confirmed the level of central and uplift grant funding.
- It was confirmed that the specific grant of £2.265 million was not contingent on reaching their target figure of 1,197 officers by 31 March 2024 but would likely be based on achieving a headcount (not necessarily full time equivalent) of 1,189. There would also be a mid-year target.
- It was explained that assumptions, about the quantity of and time to recruit staff, had been increased to reflect current recruitment levels and had been included with the £3.108 million savings programme, but this would regularly be reviewed depending on the wider economic outlook.
- The PCC reported that he had, alongside local MPs, been lobbying for a review of the police funding formula and was optimistic that this would soon take place. Members of the Panel were also keen to offer their support.

- The PCC explained that the National Police Air Service, the group providing air support to all police forces in England and Wales, had agreed that they would lease aircraft rather than purchase new aircraft one a one for one basis. The PCC felt that this would provide extra flexibility and highlighted that all PCCs in the region were keen to build up drone capacity. An evidenced based assessment would be required to establish the number of helicopters required by Wiltshire Police.
- In response to further questions about drones, the PCC outlined the increased use of drones and Wiltshire Police drone pilots. He was in discussions with the force on how to ensure this was a dedicated police function as capability increased.

Cllr Cave arrived at 10:30am.

The Panel then reviewed the findings of a consultation carried out by the OPCC about the proposed changes to the budget. The Panel observed that 54 percent of respondents were in favour of the full proposed increase. They also welcomed the work undertaken to reach different sections of the community. One Panel Member did note that he felt support had been higher in previous years and another stressed the importance of highlighting the sources of funding when asking questions.

After considering both reports in detail the Panel took reassurance from the majority support for the full proposed increase in the recent survey, believing it to be an indication that the public had confidence that the money would be spent wisely. They also stressed that it would be very important for them to continue to monitor how the funding was being spent to ensure value for money and achieve an improvement in services. On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Cllr Sheppard, it was resolved:

Decision

To support the recommendation of the PCC's office to set a precept of £69.428m, representing a £15 (6.2 percent) increase on the 2022-23 level, without qualification. This will require council tax to be set on all property bands based at £256.27 for a Band D property.

16 **Communications**

As the PCC was unavoidably delayed the Chairman chose to take the Communications Item ahead of Item 6 on the agenda.

The Chairman reminded the Panel that they were required by their procedure rules to establish and maintain a dedicated open access website including information about their role and work. He reported that he had asked officers to aim to establish a basic website by the time of the Panel's next meeting. In addition, he explained that procedure rules required that a briefing note about

the work of the Panel was circulated to elected members at least three times a year.

The Chairman also took the opportunity to thank a member of the public, Mr Caswill, for highlighting the importance of improving the Panel's communications with the wider public.

At 10:13am the Panel voted to adjourn the meeting for a maximum of 15 minutes to allow the PCC time to arrive. The meeting resumed upon his return at 10:20am.

17 **Future meeting dates**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel would be at 10:00am on Thursday 9 March 2023 at Salisbury Guildhall.

Future meeting dates were confirmed as:

- Tuesday 13 June 2023, 2:30pm – Corn Exchange in Devizes
- Thursday 14 September 2023, 10:30am – West Wilts Room, County Hall
- Thursday 14 December 2023, 10:30am – Committee Room 6, Swindon

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 10.50 am)

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

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line 01225 713114 or email
communications@wiltshire.gov.uk