

COMMISSIONER'S DIARY

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

4 February 2016

Introduction

I write a weekly blog which provides a brief overview for the public of what I have been up. This is published on my website (www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk) and the content of these blogs is copied below for the Panel's information.

THE WEEK I MET THE DUCHESS OF CAMBRIDGE

Monday 7 December

My morning started with briefings for my monitoring board this afternoon and for the health and wellbeing board on Wednesday. There we are reporting on our custody provision and a review of freedom of information requests.

The freedom of information briefing showed that we already have a number of requests and I am pleased to report that they were being dealt with in a timely fashion.

One request that we, along with all Forces have been asked to respond to is about 'missing' sex offenders; this is something that has been reported in the press recently. I have an issue with the way in which this was reported as it arises from a fundamental misunderstanding about the register. The sex offenders register is not a form of 'house arrest', it is about rehabilitation directed by the court. If an offender failed to abide by his or her registration, obviously all the agencies involved would have been made aware. The risk of this person has been assessed by the court and can be managed in the community. When it is found that they can't or won't follow the guidelines set by the court and "disappear" it is the police who report this. It is not, per se, the fault of the police it's more than that than, the risk assessment was incorrect. Regrettably it would be surprising if people didn't "disappear" from a system of trust; we should look to the assessors not the custodians for the root cause.

As readers will know, I sit on the health and wellbeing board for both Swindon and Wiltshire. Alongside me at these meetings are representatives of **Healthwatch**. I suppose in lay terms they are the voice of the customer on these boards. There are two, one for Swindon and one for Wiltshire, which I find difficult. We have a hospital in Swindon providing a service for the north of the county as well as an ambulance service covering the whole area. It seems counter intuitive to have two Healthwatch organisations.

It was good to meet the boards and the conversation turned to mental health and Salisbury detention. Sixty three per cent of those held because of mental health issues are 'repeat' visitors to custody. We have to ask why?

In the afternoon I chaired a monitoring board where the agenda covered the strategic alliance with Avon and Somerset Police, risk registers, an update from the police and crime panel, as well as a report on response rates and vulnerability. The head of finance gave an update on the comprehensive spending review; it is not worth me reporting on this here as we are still waiting for the final announcement.

The meeting also received a report on Horizon, the victim and witness care unit, and the funding of safeguarding boards and Police Community Support Officers. The minutes of these meetings are available on the website ([Commissioner's Monitoring Board minutes](#)).



The day finished with an update on the Community Policing Pilot being trialled in the west of the county.

Tuesday 8 December

I think it is a measure of Avon and Somerset's (A&S) Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) commitments to the Strategic Alliance that I have been invited to join the interview panel for the new chief constable in A&S. This is a two-day process held at A&S headquarters in Portishead.

Today each candidate was put in front of some 40 stakeholders including councillors, partners and the voluntary sector, and given a fair grilling whilst the panel watched. In another section they were meeting employee representatives. It was a fairly gruelling day for them all but the differences began to show between the candidates skills.

Disappointingly my support of A&S meant that I missed our office Christmas lunch, but I was back in Swindon in time to attend the carol service held at Christchurch. I was pleased that the police band was performing.

Wednesday 9 December

Interviews at A&S continued today. We watched the recording of the TV interviews before going into the formal interviews which consisted of a number of set questions. Again the candidates performed on all levels, but at the end of a long day; indeed two long days, the panel were unanimous in offering Andy Marsh, the current chief of Hampshire, the position of chief constable.

The appointment is subject to the police and crime panel but, as many were involved in the stakeholder process, one assumes they will agree. The result was very clear from the interviews.

In the evening I had a family outing for dinner with some 15 of us sitting down for a pub supper.

Thursday 10 December

I had a relatively early start to get to Warminster, where the Duchess of Cambridge is visiting local charity [Action on Addiction](#).

As part of the civic party there was an amount of hanging around; but fortunately I had the opportunity to visit the project recently so am aware of their work.

The Duchess was charming and engaging in her conversation with all involved and will I'm sure, raise the charity's profile and help celebrate its success; especially in training volunteers who are undertaking courses for addiction professionals at Bath University.

I was due to visit my accountants and attend Dauntsey's carol service in the afternoon but received a call that my mother-in-law had fallen and was being taken to hospital, so it was off to Great Western Hospital to A&E. Eventually Sue was discharged unbroken and spent the night at home with us.



Photo credit to Nicolas Delves Broughton

Friday 11 December

Mother-in-law returned home, but my wife is now sorting out lifeline, the excellent service run by Swindon Borough Council. Now all we have to do is make sure mother in law wears the lifeline pendant.

In the afternoon I attended the Dauntsey's lower school carol concert which was followed in the evening by a north Wilts Conservative dinner held at Lydiard House. It was an enjoyable evening with a Christmas theme.

Sunday 13 December

Today I attended a recording of carols at Salisbury Cathedral which will be broadcast by BBC Wiltshire on Christmas Day. This was an excellent opportunity to hear the choir and the Royal Artillery band and listen to the Christmas story.

In the evening I went to a reception held at the Manor House at Dauntsey's School by the Devizes supporters of [Julia's House](#). This hospice for young people will, hopefully, be opening in Devizes and give much-needed support to young people with life-limiting conditions and their families across the county. The enjoyable evening raised awareness of the project, and £300 for the charity.

LOVING SWINDON AND LOVING THE HMIC VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT

Monday 14 December

My weekly session on finance was a little premature as we still await the figure from government. I'm sure that I shall be seeking a 1.9 per cent increase in the police part of the council tax. This is about £3 per year but any financial decision will have to wait, probably until after the Christmas break.

The High Sheriff, Lady Gooch, came into my office for a chat. Her support of the police cadets has been admirable and the young people who have been chosen as 'high sheriff cadets of the year' have been given an opportunity. I hope they use it.

I then had a break in my schedule which allowed me to start to compile an invitation list for a lecture to be given at County Hall in March. I will share more about this when the details are confirmed.

At 10am the Wiltshire Criminal Justice Board met here at headquarters. It was a busy agenda covering budgets, technology, performance and partnership working. It is a shame that the area of justice is not the same as any other business areas in Wiltshire Police, in that the Force is served by two justice areas (Bristol and Hampshire) but such is the way!

In the afternoon I was briefed about complainants and about the launch of a new film on public safety entitled “stay safe”. This film is particularly important given recent events. You can view it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4jxOXbpTmnk>

Tuesday 15 December

My first meeting of the morning was with the leader of Swindon Borough Council. This was followed by the launch of Love your Swindon campaign. This is aimed at creating a greater sense of pride in the local communities by promoting a safer and cleaner neighbourhood. It will hopefully lead to reductions in issues such as littering, dog fouling and anti-social behaviour across the borough.

Back at HQ by 11am for a meeting with the chairman of the police and crime panel in advance of the budget. It was a general briefing, followed closely by a quick lunch break and straight in to another briefing by the head of human resources.

In the afternoon I attended the restorative justice scrutiny panel. This is chaired by former High Sheriff William Wyldbore-Smith and brings together representatives from the courts, probation and youth offending teams.

The primary objective of the restorative justice scrutiny panel is to ensure the restorative outcomes are appropriate and indeed to check whether the offences should have been dealt with by restorative justice in the first place.

The panel looked in detail at 12 cases, six adults and six youths. Whilst seeking further information, all were seen to have been used appropriately and the resultant action used was appropriate.

One decision was challenged and it was agreed that a “deep dive” into the facts of the case was to be undertaken.

Whilst the use of restorative justice in Wiltshire is lower than in similar forces I am content that the quality of resolutions is consistently higher. This is an example of where targets can produce perverse outcomes and not quality. That said I am sure there is the ability for us to do more whilst maintaining the standard.

We will be publishing an annual report of the scrutiny committee which will include some anonymised stories.



Wednesday 16 December

I met a complainant and her daughter this morning at Gablecross. It was not a happy story and one which I think will need the relevant officer's full attention to conclude.

In the evening I attended the Swindon North locality meeting, at which I spoke about the future of funding for Wiltshire Police. Tomorrow we should know what the national grant to Wiltshire will be so I was really speaking speculatively. I hope my message of protecting community policing and local accountability was heard loud and clear.

Thursday 17 December

Our last market day of the year in Devizes and what a miserable day it was. Not only that but the public were on a mission, and it was not to speak to the PCC. They were shopping.

It was back to the office for an afternoon of meetings. The first was to discuss funding for a project with Relate to support young victims of crime.

This was followed by a meeting to discuss the recognition procedure within the Force which has recently been revised. It was good to be updated with the new procedure.

The final meeting of the day was a positive presentation about the value for money report for 2015 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). This can be seen at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publications/wiltshire-2015-value-for-money-profile/> It is well worth a peek.

The cost of policing per head of population in Wiltshire is almost the lowest in the country, as is our cost per officer. In fact almost all our costs are below average or average where appropriate. The graphs are not the most exciting read but, overall, Wiltshire performs very well – it's a pleasing read, and is confirmed in our inspection reports. As always there is still work to do, improvements to be made and changes to be embedded, but we are going the right way.

The day finished with a photoshoot by the Christmas tree to accompany my Christmas message.



Friday 18 December

The independent **audit committee** met this morning, at which we confirmed the terms of reference and work plan for the coming year. We also reviewed the risk register and annual audit letter.

The committee reviewed the HMIC value for money profile and it was good to hear the words "tremendous report" as a reaction.

At the next meeting we will look at the **Community Policing** pilot.



The committee meeting was quickly followed by a short commissioner's monitoring board. All attention moved to the finance director as he worked through the figures for next year.

In the afternoon I entertained candidates from Avon and Somerset and Gloucestershire for the PCC elections in May. This was an opportunity for them to understand how our office works and the direction of travel that our Force is on.

The final meeting of the week was with the Special Constabulary; they presented a paper entitled "Attraction, Recruitment, Training and Retention Business Case". This is a further attempt by the constabulary to build the numbers of specials from 162 to meet my Police and Crime Plan vision of 500 by May 2017. The plan is well thought through and draws on experience of other forces, which I am pleased by. It does require some investment, but I still believe that the building of this group is important for policing in the county.

I'VE BECOME A VICTIM OF CYBER CRIME

Monday 4 January

I have become a victim of a form of cyber crime. Over the Christmas break all the documents and photos on my personal computer at home have had their decryption changed and I received a message explaining that "this means that the structure and data within your files have been irrevocably changed, you will not be able to work with them, read them or see them, it is the same thing as losing them forever, but with our help you can restore them".

The note goes on to give me addresses that I must visit in order to unlock the files, and says I should get on with it, suggesting that I should not waste time seeking a solution because they do not exist. It is nothing short of a ransom note.

I must say I feel as if someone has rifled the drawers in my bedroom. Many of the family photos are only held electronically and have not been printed out. Even though no one has physically entered our home, both my wife and I feel violated. I have reported the events to the police, and I'll be informing Action Fraud too. No doubt future blogs will give me the opportunity to update readers on my experiences.

Today is my first working day after the Christmas break and I must admit I didn't like hearing the alarm clock going off, or getting out of bed to be in the office for 8am. It's strange how quickly you adjust to a more leisurely start!

It was very good to see Lady Gooch, the [High Sheriff of Wiltshire](#), who is very supportive of some of the initiatives my office is undertaking. Her successor has been selected and the name has gone forward to a body chaired by the Lord Chief Justice. The final appointment is made by the Queen on 15 March. However, in order to plan a smooth transition and a full diary, Lady Gooch was accompanied by the nominee who I feel sure will serve the county well.

On the morning of Saturday 5 March, Lady Gooch and I are arranging a conference in County Hall, Trowbridge at which the senior Muslim advisor on chaplaincy to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Ahtsham Ali, will be speaking on the subject of "Analysing the roots of religious extremism".

We heard Mr Ali speak at Erlestoke Prison and felt that a wider audience would benefit from hearing what he has to say. At a time when conflict is synonymous with religion, we feel that it is really important that people in Wiltshire are given the opportunity to understand the

Muslim faith. We are inviting judges, MPs, school leaders and probation officers as well as representatives of all faiths. Should you wish to attend, please let my office know.

The rest of the day was spent catching up with colleagues after the break.

Tuesday 5 January

The day started with a regular performance update. This is a useful briefing, looking at trends and events across the county. It's the process by which the Force keeps an eye on crime trends to ensure that significant changes are picked up quickly and resources allocated to address the change. We don't have targets, because they can lead to perverse outcomes, but we do need a system which identifies issues within our communities.

This evening I have been invited to Downing Street for a reception hosted by the Prime Minister. So I set off late afternoon by train.

As you would hope and expect, security at the entrance to Downing Street was very tight, but also professional and I had no difficulty with my built-in defibrillator. Generally, operators of security scanners accept that the gadget might set their equipment off. What they find harder to accept is that their equipment might set my defibrillator off! So the police officers allowed me to bypass the machine and gave me a physical frisking. A good compromise.

Downing Street is like Doctor Who's Tardis. From the outside it looks like a narrow terraced town house. But step inside and you realise just how big it is. You can find yourself walking along a corridor that stretches from No 10, to No 11 and possibly even No 12. Going up the stairs you see the pictures of past prime ministers from the era of Gladstone and Disraeli right up to David Cameron's predecessor, Gordon Brown.

This was a reception for police and crime commissioners. It was pleasing that the Prime Minister recalled his visit to Wiltshire in 2012 when I became the first PCC whose election was declared. Lord Wasserman, the architect of the reforms which brought in PCCs, was also present, along with the Home Secretary Theresa May.



Wednesday 6 January

My **consultation** on the proposal to increase the police part of the council tax began yesterday. My proposal is that we increase the so-called precept by £3.12 per annum, which is below the Government threshold which would trigger an expensive referendum. Along with my senior team I will be attending various area boards in Wiltshire and locality meetings in Swindon to seek public support for the proposal. I have also put a **feedback form on my website**, together with the details of the proposal. Once the consultation closes on 2 February I will be consulting with the Police and Crime Panel.

When I commission police services from the Chief Constable for the tax year 2016-17, I want to ensure that community policing has as much protection as can be afforded. Although government funding for Wiltshire has only been reduced by about £300,000, there are other cost pressures which must be met, particularly around centrally mandated increases in pay and National Insurance. The amount raised locally through the police part of council tax does



not cover the full costs of community policing. But I want to ensure that community policing remains a priority for the Constabulary alongside tackling – with regional partners – sophisticated and organised crime which knows no boundaries.

Before Christmas the Home Office carried out a consultation on the funding arrangement for all forces in England and Wales. It has been clear for a long while that Wiltshire is under-funded as a result of the present formula. The consultation addressed how to spread Home Office funding more fairly. Unfortunately there was an error in the maths and the consultation was postponed. We anticipate that a new consultation will take place in advance of the 2017-18 settlement. I am confident that Wiltshire will be better off under a revised scheme. Therefore I am prepared to use some reserves in 2016-17 to maintain officer numbers until we get the funding we deserve.

Thursday 7 January

We are looking for volunteers to join the **Independent Custody Visitors (ICV)** scheme. They make unannounced visits, in the company of a colleague, to the custody units in Melksham or Swindon to check that detainees are being properly looked after. You have to be at least 18 and live, work or study in Swindon or Wiltshire and have been a resident in the UK for at least three years. The posts are voluntary and unpaid, but travelling expenses are reimbursed and training is provided. You would be joining a team of ICVs and would be expected to make, on average, two or three visits every other month.

More details, including an application form, can be found on www.wiltshire-pcc.gov.uk or please contact Carolyn Filmore, Business Manager. Applications close at noon on Friday 5 February 2016.

We had briefing sessions on south west collaboration and the public engagement strategy in advance of my monitoring board tomorrow. In the evening I went to Salisbury area board at which I presented **my case for the precept**. People seemed very receptive to the proposal. I got home from the Salisbury meeting at about 10.30pm which means I had another 14-hour day!

Friday 8 January

Having griped about a long day yesterday, my first appointment this morning was in Swindon (just a five minute drive from home) at 10am when I visited the Harbour Project which works to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. The charity, based in Broad Street, Swindon offers support, builds awareness and raises money.

It received £2,800 from my fund which is managed by the Community Foundation. The cash will enable the charity to continue to support people from countries including Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Afghanistan who have fled war and persecution to seek asylum or refugee status in the UK.

In the afternoon I had a meeting of the Commissioner's Monitoring Board at which I was very pleased to welcome Assistant Chief Constable Mark Cooper, who is standing in for T/ACC Paul Mills who, with fellow ACC Kier Pritchard, is attending a senior leaders' development course for the next three months. Mark comes from Dorset and we have also welcomed Julian Moss from Avon & Somerset. This is a fantastic opportunity for us to learn from them and for them to gain an understanding of us. I look forward to working with them in the coming weeks. The meeting talked about the strategic alliance with Avon & Somerset, a consultation that is being undertaken by the Home Office about stalking protection orders, the medium term financial strategy and commissioned some work to look with our council partners at the policy on speed limits and parking enforcement.

One further meeting to finish the week with T/Supt Phil Staynings who is in charge of crime prevention. We will be scheduling regular meetings as I had with his predecessor, where the agenda covers Community Speed Watch, mental health triage, Special Constabulary,

Neighbourhood Watch and Street Watch, volunteers, rural and cyber crime, cadets, junior good citizens and I am sure one or two smaller topics that we didn't cover in our first meeting.

