

Wiltshire Council

Police and Crime Panel – 2 February 2023

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation

Question from: Mr Chris Caswill

Question to: Cllr Steve Bucknell – Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

Question

Thank you for your detailed response to my question at the last PCP meeting. Hopefully the discussion at this meeting of communication with the public on issues of this gravity should be a big step forward. Your reply also included the very positive assertion that “the PEEL Report and the PCC’s response to it forms the very core of every PCP meeting.” If accurate, that would be very welcome, given the seriousness of not only the PEEL Report but also the HMIC Report on Child Protection by the Force. Unfortunately, the evidence so far doesn’t bear this out. The agenda items, papers and discussions in 2022 were remarkably thin on reassurance, and the only substantive discussion took place behind closed doors. Thank you also for your very open clarification on that issue, and for ensuring that at least a partial Minute was in due course made public, but the fact remains that that really important discussion was not accessible to the Wiltshire public.

This is now the second meeting of this Panel in 2023, and the HMIC Reports and PCCs response have been on neither agenda. My questions on this are:

- (a) Would you not agree that this is inconsistent with the commitment to them being ‘at the very core of every meeting’?

And

- (b) Could you explain why it wasn’t possible for the Reports and the current state of the PCP’s and Force’s responses to be on this February agenda, and discussed at this meeting
- (c) And give a categorical assurance that they will be on the PCP ‘s March 9th agenda, for substantive discussion (and hopefully reassurance) – and in the public domain

Thank you

Answer

We would like to reiterate that the PEEL Report, and PCC's response to it, are at the core of the panel's work and thank you for your deep interest in this matter. We also thank you for your continued interest in ensuring that the panel continues to hold the PCC's office to account.

We are pleased to hear that you found the clarification, of the reason that the PEEL discussion was held behind closed doors, useful. We also welcome your comments about the panel's aspiration to improve its communication with the public and hope that you see the addition of a standing item on our agendas as a step forward in this regard.

A specific agenda item on the PCC's response to the PEEL report was not included on the agendas for the panel's January and February meetings, as these are additional meetings to consider the appointment of the Chief Constable, budget proposals and the setting of the precept. Given the gravity of these issues, and their potential impact on the force, it was deemed appropriate to hold specific meetings dedicated to these topics. Both meetings are being held in addition to the panel's four other meetings, scheduled between March and December, during which quarterly reports from the PCC's office will be received.

We can confirm that the PEEL report, and the PCC's response to it, will be included on the agenda of our next meeting, on 9 March 2023. As the panel shares your view about the importance of scrutinising the PCC's response to the HMICFRS report, we are happy to provide steadfast reassurance that we will monitor this closely and it will be at the core of our forthcoming quarterly meetings.