

Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 14 NOVEMBER 2024 AT COMMITTEE ROOM 6, SWINDON BOROUGH COUNCIL OFFICES, EUCLID ST, SWINDON SN1 2JH.

Present:

Cllr Steve Bucknell (Chairman), Cllr Junab Ali (Vice-Chairman), Denisa Ahmeti, Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Ross Henning, Cllr George Jeans, Cllr Vijay Manro, Cllr Kelvin Nash, Cllr James Sheppard, Cllr Ian Thorn, Louise Williams and Cllr Claire Crilly (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Gayle Cook

Police and Crime Commissioner, Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil

Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer of the OPCC, Naji Darwish

Chief Constable Catherine Roper

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Saunders

Strategic Lead Criminal Justice and Reoffending, Caz Deverall-Hart

A/Head of Probation Delivery Unit, Swindon and Wiltshire, Huw Wilford

Integrated Offender Manager Supervisor at Wiltshire Police, Mark Wilkinson

OPCC Head of Strategy, Performance and Oversight, James Griffin (online)

Swindon Borough Council Committee Services Officer, Annie Vickers

Wiltshire Council Democratic Services Officer, Matt Hitch

64 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Stanka Adamcova – substituted by Cllr Claire Crilly
- Cllr Tony Pickernell

65 **Minutes and Matters Arising**

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Saunders said that he would provide information about whether the police had the authority to add additional padlocks to doors.

On the proposal of Cllr Vijay Manro, seconded by Cllr Ross Henning, it was resolved to make the:

Decision

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 as a true and correct record.

66 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

67 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman informed the Panel that the [Ride Along](#) scheme, allowing Panel members and members of the public to shadow the police when they were out on operations, was scheduled to be up and running by mid-December. All the Panel members confirmed that they were interested in participating in the scheme. It was noted that further information would be provided to the Panel and that the final arrangements would be made with the relevant police teams.

68 **Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

69 **Wiltshire Chief Constable Update**

Chief Constable Catherine Roper updated the Panel about the findings of recent inspections into the performance of Wiltshire Police. She was pleased to report that the latest Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) report from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) had found that Wiltshire Police had made progress in all, bar two, areas. An in-depth analysis had been undertaken to understand why progress had not been made in the two areas that had been static and HMICFRS had been assured that the foundations had been put in place to enable progress in these areas in future.

The way that Wiltshire Police had been implementing Operation Soteria, the government's programme to improve the investigation of sexual offences, had also been inspected. Although the formal report had yet to be published, the Chief Constable noted that the force had received positive feedback, including about how it was tackling stalking. Furthermore, Wiltshire Police had undergone an inspection about how it was tackling serious and organised crime. The results of the inspection were expected to be published in the new year.

The Chief Constable explained that Wiltshire Police were keen to embed the progress that had been made. The force was due to hold a strategic summit the following week to review their three-year plan and financial position.

Members of the Panel praised an increase in the visibility of neighbourhood policing teams. The Chief Constable welcomed the feedback from the Panel and explained that she had reversed a change, introduced in 2014, that had merged neighbourhood and response teams. The new model was bearing fruit and empowered neighbourhood teams to carry out more proactive community policing.

The Panel noted that they would welcome further information about the powers that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) had to tackle issues such as cycling on pavements.

In reply to concerns raised about the restructure of Wiltshire Police's response teams, specifically, that the reallocation of officers from Warminster to Trowbridge was impacting response times in Mere, the Chief Constable explained that the aim of the new process was to create greater resilience. She highlighted that Wiltshire Police had its highest number of police officers in a decade, so had a relatively high proportion of new recruits. The response teams operated a spoke and hub approach where officers would gather and then cars would disperse throughout their areas of responsibility. The Chief Constable was optimistic that, as the level of experience grew within the force, the spoke and hub model could be relaxed so that the officers did not have to gather as frequently. She provided assurances that the model would be closely monitored and refined so that they could provide the best level of service. As it had been reported that a large number of vehicles from other police forces had attended an incident in Mere, she also noted that Wiltshire Police worked closely with neighbouring forces to ensure that cars could respond as quickly as possible in border areas.

The Panel stated that they would welcome greater continuity in staffing within neighbourhood police teams to ensure that local knowledge was retained. The Chief Constable agreed that continuity was important and stated that this was a focus of the force.

In response to a query about whether there was a target date for Wiltshire Police to be rated as outstanding, the Chief Constable explained that they had a focus on continual progress and that HMICFRS inspected Wiltshire Police every two years.

When asked about why only 70 percent of 999 calls were answered within the target of 10 seconds, the Chief Constable observed that the figures in the PEEL report dated from March, when Wiltshire was the worst performing of the 43 forces in England and Wales, when measured against that metric. However, she explained that Wiltshire had made significant recent progress, becoming the thirty third best performing force in September and rising to become the seventeenth best performing at the time of the meeting. She argued that the progress made evidenced a fundamental change in the way that the force was operating.

When asked about how the Chief Constable was ensuring that all staff bought into her vision to reform the service, the Chief Constable emphasised the importance of collaborative and reflective working. She acknowledged that people often found change hard but stated that officers were determined to provide a good service and were committed to continuing to improve. She highlighted the large number of volunteer special constables in Wiltshire as an example of the goodwill and passion for policing in the county. She also noted that over 100 Guides had completed the Girl Guide Policing Challenge and that a similar scheme was being replicated with the Scouts.

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Saunders also took the opportunity to praise the work done by special constables in areas ranging from harm reduction to drone usage.

70 **CCC Improvements**

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Saunders updated the Panel about the measures being put in place to improve performance at the Crime and Communications Centre (CCC). Points included:

- The Assistant Chief Constable had joined Wiltshire Police in June and had found that the force was full of enthusiastic people that were keen to improve the service.
- As the CCC had a relatively high number of inexperienced staff, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil, had agreed to fund 165 people staff to cover 145 posts. It was anticipated that the numbers of staff would decrease over time as the average level of experience increased.
- As well responding to calls, the CCC had a responsibility to accurately record crimes within statutory timescales.
- The CCC received around 111,000 999 and 92,000 101 calls per year as well as processing 65,000 crimes reported using the online system.
- The CCC were looking at robotics and automation to help improve efficiency, as demand for services was increasing by approximately five percent a year.
- The government had set a target for 90 percent of 999 calls to be answered within 10 seconds, but currently only five of the 43 police forces in England and Wales were meeting this goal.
- As the staff in CCC gained experience they were able to answer a wider variety of calls, which allowed for greater flexibility in the way that resources could be deployed. There were good opportunities for progression and many CCC staff went on to become police officers.
- The force had recently invested in the EISEC geolocation system which allowed calls to be transferred automatically from BT.
- Digital boards had been installed at the call centre to help staff to review demand. The data on the boards had been updated to allow operators to improve their situational awareness.
- As stated by the Chief Constable under her update, there had been a significant improvement in performance since August. The CCC were now just two percent away from the national target of answering 90 percent of 999 calls within 10 seconds.
- The recent Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection found that 25.8 percent of 101 calls were abandoned. However, it was likely that the true abandonment rate was significantly lower, as many people 'phoned back or reported crime online. QueueBuster technology had been introduced so that the public could hang up and be called back. Some forces did have technology that

allowed them to differentiate between calls that had truly been abandoned and those that got in touch at a later time.

- The Assistant Chief Constable chaired an improvement board about transformational change and engaged with the Chief of Corporate Services, John Derryman, about the resources required to continue improvement. The Assistant Chief Constable's role was to embed the technology and utilise the investments that had been made in the best possible way.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Panel thanked the Assistant Chief Constable for his update and welcomed the progress that had been made in the time that it was taking to answer calls.
- It was highlighted that EISEC technology had been around for 20 years.
- In response to a query about whether it would be possible to set up a general enquiries line to reduce demand on the 101 and 999 services, it was noted that the contact details for neighbourhood teams were available on Wiltshire Police's website and on social media.
- There had been a technical glitch with the call centre on Monday 10 November, leading to a delay in some 101 calls being answered. No 999 calls were missed as they were picked up in Gablecross Call Centre and diverted to other forces. People that had abandoned calls were 'phoned back so that no emergencies were missed.
- Assurances were sought that when landline 'phones went fully online Wiltshire Police would have the resilience to keep 'phone lines open during a power outage. The Chief Constable explained that there had recently been a multi-agency exercise to test a response to a complete power outage. She noted that a series of recommendations had been developed based on the exercise and that they had been shared with the agencies that had taken part. She could also share the relevant findings with the Panel. The Panel said that they would welcome this information and that they were keen to add it to their forward work plan.
- In response of a query about the length of time that 90 percent of calls were being answered in, the Assistant Chief Constable noted that he did not have those figures available but reassured the Panel that the calls there were not answered within 10 seconds did not take significantly longer. He stated that he could share further data about call response times.
- The introduction of robotics would be a significant step forward as it would allow crimes reported online to be seamlessly integrated without the need to manually copy information. This would improve accuracy and allow call-centre staff to use their time more flexibly.
- The PCC emphasised the importance of collaborating with other forces on procurement to secure economies of scale and explained that forces in South West England had taken the initiative in driving this forward. He noted that the government would be likely to mandate further co-

operation and emphasised the importance of police forces ensuring that their views were taken account of in the process.

- When asked about the prevalence of nuisance calls, the Assistant Chief Inspector confirmed that there had not been a significant rise in this issue. He highlighted that repeat calls were often made by people suffering with mental health issues and reported that the Thrive process had been embedded within CCC to help support people to get support in the appropriate way.

Other issues discussed under this item included:

- Chief Constable Catherine Roper confirmed that there was no set target for the number of special constables in the force, but they were blessed to have a high number. The special constables volunteered thousands of hours and had recently played important roles in tackling youth violence in Swindon and Devizes. A new recruitment drive was underway.
- The Assistant Chief Constable explained that the average length of service of a special constable was three and a half years. However, there were a number of special constables that had been with Wiltshire Police for decades.
- The PCC explained that his office was now paying the federation fees for special constables, whereas previously, they had had to pay their own. He explained that in each year an award was given to the best special constable. This year, the award had been won by a drone pilot who had developed technology that could be attached to drone and detect mobile 'phone signals.

71 **Update from the Police and Crime Commissioner**

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil gave a wide-ranging update about the progress towards his Crime Plan, the National Police Air Service (NPAS), collaboration between forces and the financial position of Wiltshire Police. Points included:

- The National Police Chiefs' Council was undertaking a review of the strategic framework for how police forces accessed air support. The PCC welcomed the review but noted that he expected that a revised framework would still not be in place for a number of years.
- The PCC expressed frustration that Wiltshire Police were contributing financially to NPAS to pay for fixed wing aircraft that they rarely used. He highlighted that 80 percent of missions were now carried out using drones and that he had been leading collaboration at a regional level to improve capability.
- The new government were keen to strengthen collaboration between police forces in a range of areas. The PCC explained that forces in South West England had been leading the way by looking at how they could deliver efficiencies by sharing facilities.

- It was anticipated by the PCC that the role of PCCs would continue to develop and that PCCs were keen to strengthen powers and local input into criminal justice coordination, such as probation and youth justice services. He explained that, in his view, the current justice system would benefit from having more coordination and joint planning.
- At a recent meeting that the PCC had with the new Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention, Dame Diana Johnson DBE, she had been unable to confirm what Wiltshire's central grant for policing would be for 2025/26. The PCC was also seeking clarity about whether central government grant funding, such as the Safer Streets Fund, would be rolled over for another year.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Panel thanked the PCC for his update.
- It was not yet confirmed whether the police would have to pay the increase in national insurance announced in the government's October budget. The PCC was concerned that if Wiltshire Police had to pay the increase it would place significant strain on their resources and would reverse the improvements that been made.
- In response to a question about drones, the PCC gave a detailed answer about the number and variety in service with Wiltshire Police. He argued that the police could learn from other organisations, such as the Maritime Agency, that had a long track record of drone usage. He also highlighted the potential strategic advantages that drones could bring, such as helping to inform the number of officers that might be required to attend a particular incident.
- The Safer Streets Fund and the Serious Violence Duty were government funded schemes that were mostly spent on additional police patrols and street wardens. The PCC believed that these additional resources had made a significant contribution to the 16 percent reduction in reports of anti-social behaviour across Wiltshire. The Chief Executive of the Office of the PCC (OPCC), Naji Darwish, explained that the Safer Streets Fund was used to provide additional patrols in specific locations and that quarterly updates were sent to the Home Office so that they could monitor the impact that the programme was having.
- When asked to comment on the discrepancy between the decline in the reporting of anti-social behaviour and the findings of the public consultation on the PCC's draft Police and Crime Plan, which showed a perception that anti-social behaviour was increasing, the Chief Executive explained that there had been conflicting data in perception for a long period. However, he stressed that the OPCC were continually looking at how they could improve public confidence, feelings of safety and engagement.
- The Chief Constable explained that she saw improving public perceptions as one of the police's responsibilities. She outlined a series of steps that Wiltshire Police were undertaking to improve engagement,

such as posting more on social media, visiting community groups and Area Boards.

- In response to a query about the drop in satisfaction in the victim journey, including how victims were kept informed about the investigations into their case, the Chief Constable acknowledged that further work was required. She explained that the force was improving oversight and increasing training about this issue. She also noted that the recent Police Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection had found an overall improvement in Wiltshire Police's investigations.
- The Chairman encouraged the press to attend the Panel's meetings.
- The Chief Constable reminded the Panel about Wiltshire Police's [community commitments](#) and their role in improving trust in the police. She also highlighted that Project Vigilant was underway to help protect the public from being victims of sexual offences on nights out.
- The PCC emphasised that the Chief Constable and he shared the Panel's desire to make communities feel safer and the need to improve communication, such as the response time to 101 calls. He stressed that the increased emphasis on neighbourhood policing and attendance at community events were important ways of showing the public the improvement that was taking place. He also explained that many negative perceptions about the police related to national, rather than Wiltshire specific, issues.
- Assistant Chief Constable Ian Saunders explained that responses to attend incidents were broken down into two categories, priority incidents and immediate incidents. He reassured that Panel that the times taken to respond to incidents were heading in the right direction. A review of the logs of priority incidents had been undertaken to analyse how response times could be improved. There had also been a dramatic improvement in the control room since the introduction of the 'task not ask' system in November 2023, after which officers were told, not asked, where to go.
- Immediate response times in Swindon were within the service level agreement. The rural nature of the rest of the county did present challenges for immediate response times. However, studies were underway to review demand and to identify hotspots where response times could be improved.
- A member of the Panel noted that he had recently sat on a public scrutiny panel that studied police complaints. The scrutiny panel identified a significant backlog in the number of complaints and questioned whether there were enough staff allocated in the OPCC to address the backlog.
- The PCC welcomed the additional scrutiny that would come from the new public panel. He explained that serious disciplinary complaints were referred to professional standards and that the OPCC processed complaints that related to the quality of service that had been provided and aimed to rectify this. He acknowledged that the number of complaints had increased but stated that the OPCC were ensuring that the process was as efficient as possible and that included the appropriate level of staffing. A rigorous analysis of complaints was

underway to identify trends and the potential opportunities for learning and prevention of complaints by improving policing.

- The Chief Executive of the OPCC explained that there was lots of statutory guidance relating to complaint processes and that he was keen to take onboard feedback as the new scrutiny group developed greater experience.
- When asked about the Further Action Taken (FAT) rate for rape and serious sexual offences, the PCC explained that Wiltshire Police had a FAT rate of two percent when he started his role and that this had increased to over eight percent. Although significant progress had been made, and the FAT rate for these types of offences was above the national average, the PCC was keen to stress that far more progress was needed. The Chief Constable reiterated the PCC's message that they were keen to drive improvement, not just in the FAT rate, but also in victim support. She reported that Wiltshire Police had recently received positive feedback about how they had implemented Operation Soteria, to protect women and girls.

72 **Draft Police and Crime Plan 2024-28**

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Philip Wilkinson, OBE, MPhil, introduced the latest draft of his Police and Crime Plan for 2025-2029, and thanked the Panel for the feedback that they had given at the previous meeting. He explained that the improvements made in Wiltshire Police, gave him the confidence to set more specific goals than his previous Crime Plan. He noted that the draft was a working document that had been developed following a wide consultation.

During the discussion, the Panel thanked the PCC for the updated draft and welcomed the changes made. They also suggested that the Crime Plan could better articulate what good practice looked like in tackling the PCC's second priority of reducing violence and serious harm.

The PCC welcomed the comments and noted that he would revisit that part of the report. He noted that design work would be undertaken and anticipated that the final version of the Crime Plan would be published in the new year.

73 **Reducing Reoffending**

Representatives from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), Wiltshire Police and the Probation Service gave a presentation about the multi-agency work that was going on to reduce reoffending.

Caz Deverall-Hart, Strategic Lead Criminal Justice and Reoffending at the OPCC, explained that female offenders were one of the priority groups supported as there had been a significant increase in the rate of female offending in recent years. She then outlined some of the holistic work that was being carried out by the Wiltshire Female Justice Support Board (FJSB), which was established in 2020 to tackle the issue. She explained that the FJSB

helped to commission services and develop pathways for female rehabilitation while also ensuring that the work in Wiltshire aligned to national strategies.

Mark Wilkinson, Integrated Offender Manager Supervisor, provided information about the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme that was introduced nationally in 2012. He reported that, although 85 percent of the 77 people currently going through the programme in Wiltshire were there on a statutory basis, 15 percent were there voluntarily, which was the third highest proportion in the country. He explained that the IOM programme tackled criminality in people with entrenched behaviours by studying their traits and the triggers that made them commit offences. People going through the programme were supported for at least a six-month period, to understand their motivations, and were then monitored for a further six months. The effectiveness of the of the scheme was shown by the significant reduction in reoffending rate in the six months after people had completed the IOM programme. Although costs to the criminal justice system increased during the period that offenders were on the programme, as they were integrated into their communities, the costs fell significantly afterwards and were lower than the costs before people entered.

Huw Wilford, Acting Head of the Probation Delivery Unit, gave a brief update about recent changes to the standard determinate sentences, which allowed some prisoners to be released 40, rather than 50 percent, of the way through their sentence. He explained that the aim of the scheme was to reduce pressure on prison places but noted that the number of people released early in Wiltshire was relatively small.

The Acting Head of the Probation Delivery Unit also gave an update about the probation reset programme. He explained that, overall, the probation service in Wiltshire was currently supervising 1,832 individuals, including 908 based in Swindon. He noted that there were pressures on staffing in probation and the prison service, so they were trying to use their resources in the most effective way. It had been identified that the service was most impactful in the first two thirds of the time that they spent with their clients, so there had been a shift to focus more resources on this period. Two thirds of the way through the programme, cases would be categorised as rest cases, although people would still be actively monitored. Research suggested that early intervention and support on a licence, or community order, was likely to have the greatest impact.

During the discussion, points included:

- The Panel thanked the officers for their presentation and praised the multi-agency work that was taking place to reduce reoffending.
- In response to a query about whether six months was long enough to monitor people coming out of the IOM programme, the Integrated Offender Manager Supervisor confirmed that it was an appropriate level of time. He noted that his team received a daily intelligence briefing about offenders that had gone through the six-month period after

completion IOM, so that they could take a proactive approach to supporting individuals where necessary.

- The table on the left-hand side of page 51 of the agenda pack showed financial data for the six-month period before and after the IOM.
- When asked about which offenders might be eligible for early release 40 percent of the way through their sentence, it was confirmed that no one in prison because of a conviction for a violent offence would be released early.
- It was confirmed that all Behaviour Change programmes took place face-to-face. Online interventions were used for some out of court resolutions for lower-level offences and were closely monitored. There were around 40 crime types which out of court resolutions could be used for and work would take place in the new year to ensure that online interventions were having the required impact.
- It was noted that Police Community Support Officers were doing valuable early intervention work with young people.
- When asked about what was being done to improve the timeliness of reports for court, the Integrated Offender Manager Supervisor explained that active steps were being put in place to try to address the issue. He noted that there were both national and regional rolling recruitment drives. The court system was understaffed, but resources were being moved to try to address this issue. Nearly 100 new, fully funded, officers had been recruited in South West England in 2024.

74 **Forward Work Plan**

The Panel noted their forward work plan. They agreed to add an item about the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner's police complaints handling process to the plan.

They also noted that they would like further information to be provided about Wiltshire Police's emergency plans in response to power outages, with a particular focus on the future requirement for landline 'phones to rely on online connectivity.

Additional details about the call abandonment rate in the Crime and Communications Centre were also requested.

75 **Communications**

Apologies were given for a technical glitch which prevented the start of the meeting from being broadcast.

The Chairman noted that the Panel had improved its communications over the past year by broadcasting its meetings online and submitting an annual report to the Full Council meetings of both local authorities. He also noted that the Panel were open to further ideas as to how they could improve their communications.

76 **Commissioner's Question Time**

There were no questions for the Commissioner.

77 **Future Meeting Dates**

The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be on Thursday 16 January 2025, at 10:30am, in Kennet Room, County Hall.

Other future meeting dates were confirmed as:

- Wednesday 5 February 2025, 10:30am
- Wednesday 26 March 2025, 10:30am
- Thursday 26 June 2025, 10:30am
- Thursday 11 September 2025, 10:30am
- Tuesday 25 November 2025, 10:30am

(Duration of meeting: 10.30 am - 1.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Matt Hitch of Democratic Services,
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