

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

6th March 2014

Introduction

This report sets out a summary of the commitments I have undertaken since the last Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 6th February 2014. I write a weekly blog which provides a brief overview for the public of what I have been up to. 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.

FINISHING THE WEEK WITH A VISIT TO A BLUEZ 'N' ZUZ DISCO AND COMMUNITY CURRY

Posted: Tuesday 28th January 2014

Friday 17 January

Advocacy after Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) is a national charity which is based in Swindon. Set up in memory of Julia and Will Pemberton, it is run by Frank Mullane and has established an excellent reputation in its field. This was the third year I have attended the national conference and I'm always impressed by those victims who stand up and tell the audience about their experiences. We also heard from other leaders in their field and I was pleased that a good cohort from the Constabulary were there to listen.

Monday 20 January

My birthday, but I don't think that will count for much! Chair of the Police and Crime Panel was first in for one of our 'one to ones'. A good opportunity to discuss the future work programme of the panel. Looking at police performance is a weekly event and this will be augmented this week by the publication of the crime stats on Thursday. I continue to press the force over non-domestic burglary – one of my neighbours was burgled in the mid-afternoon and I will be kept apprised of his experience of the service!

In the afternoon I held the bi-weekly Commissioner's Monitoring Board. We looked at a range of topics, from how much is spent in the local economy, to the complexities of the Lifetime Pension Allowances, through to the estate and meeting the challenges of next year's budget. Public opinion on an increase to the police and crime element of council tax (precept) is balanced at present with still a time to go. That said it is not helped by continuing silence from the government of the figures and the capping level.

Evening off to see an excellent play called the Duck House. No prizes for guessing what it was about - well worth the visit.

Tuesday 21 January

The PCCs get together as a group about every quarter in London. This is a great opportunity to share our experiences and good practice. Damian Green the Policing Minister gave the ministerial address. You can read this speech here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/damian-green-speech-to-the-apcc>

After a session on the governance of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioner (APCC), we had a speech by Keith Bristow of the National Crime Agency. Interesting that they are recruiting an extra 400 investigators this year. Quite a lot of the speech was about the cyber threat, in all its forms, something that I firmly believe can only be addressed at a national/regional level. Other subjects included Chief Officer pay, mental health, funding of appropriate adults services and police integrity.

As tomorrow is our regional meeting, I took the opportunity to spend more time in the evening talking to the PCCs from Dorset and Devon and Cornwall, who were staying in Swindon over-night. It is amazing what progress and understanding is achieved in informal meetings!

Wednesday 22 January

Wiltshire's turn to host the regular regional PCC and Chief Constable meeting. In the first part of the meeting we hold the governance meetings around existing collaboration. This time it was Zephyr, our regional capability around serious and organised crime. During lunch we had a regional briefing from the army on relocating before moving into our regional meeting. It was a challenging meeting to chair. We had an explanation of the work on-going between Dorset and Devon and Cornwall exploring how the two forces can

collaborate effectively across all areas of policing. There was also a good update on the progress around forensics. There is some work to do in the next few days for all of us to define what we want out of regional collaboration. The good news was the confirmation of funding from the national innovation fund.

A drive to Chippenham for the Wiltshire public service board meeting. I suppose the main topic was talks between Dorset and Wiltshire fire brigades over a merger. I have reservations as to whether this is the right course of action, especially when we are looking to at a wider public service platform in Wiltshire and Swindon. It will be interesting to see the government's response to the Knight Report.

Thursday 23 January

A morning of briefings, followed by the Swindon Youth Offending Management Board. Heartening statistics. There is a real challenge for 'OnTrack' counselling service where demand is outstripping the ability of counselors to cope. This leads to delays in accessing the service. One question is whether the number of volunteer counsellors can be increased. I'll add the service to the list in the volunteering strategy document.

Crime figures for the quarter to September have been released. These show crime is down by 7.3%.

Wiltshire Council Leader Jane Scott invited me to address the conservative group about the increase in the police and crime element of council tax. I hope I got over the message about the protection of local policing into the future, and that Wiltshire Council's budget and the Police and Crime Budget cannot be directly compared. Following that a public presentation of the same message at Corsham Area Board.

Friday 24 January

Photo with Rosa Mattinson in a T-shirt for uncommon International Woman's Day, followed by the official opening of the ISIS project in Swindon. This is a partnership between Wiltshire Probation and the Nelson Trust, offering support to women both on probation and those leaving prison without support. I visited the project in Gloucester a few months ago and was very impressed. They have acquired good offices and space for clients. At the opening one of the clients of the project gave us a talk of her experience through family abuse, drugs drink, theft taking her to prison, but then her rehabilitation now being a key worker with the project. I think there will be a real challenge around housing provision for the group. Too often a woman is said to be 'housed' because she has found shelter either sofa surfing or in a relationship of need. This needs to be addressed.

In the evening I was 'strutting my stuff' at a Bluez N Zuz disco in Calne. Around 150 young people having a great time and there was support from the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Special Constables. We ought to be supporting and promoting these more.

Saturday 25 January

A further 20 Specials attested in the morning, and in the afternoon I attended an event in Broadgreen Swindon, arranged by BOND (Broadgreen Organisation for Neighbourhood Development). There was belly dancing, drumming by Churchfield School, singing and more, including curry meal. Around 15 ethnic groups were present in a show of community which was very reassuring.

TAKING TIME TO REFLECT ON THE GREATEST CRIME OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Posted: Monday 3rd February 2014

Monday 27 January

Breaking a morning in the office, I attended the Holocaust memorial service in the centre of Swindon. It seems right that a crime commissioner should take part in a day on which we remember perhaps the greatest crime of the 20th century. But we should not forget that hate crime continues today, both at national and local levels. I was pleased to see some school children there.

Returning to the office I attended the Standards and Ethics Board. This is work in progress, and Wiltshire is not a trial area. It does concern me that every commissioner has identified that greater independence is required, and work is going on locally. I had no idea that there were specific Home Office approved trials. Am I missing information that should be prepared by the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners?](#)

I have been asked to attend a special sub-group of the Police and Crime Panel on Wednesday so I spent two hours preparing for that, along with staff who are pulling together information and figures in response to their request.

Continuing my rounds of the area boards and speaking about the precept (the police and crime element of the council tax). This evening I was in Devizes. A well-attended meeting and there was general support from those I spoke to for the proposed increase.

Tuesday 28 January

Always good to open the diary and see a light day for meetings, and only evening commitments. The [One Swindon Partnership](#) board meeting was good as we progressed the various strands of work. I am hopeful that the transformation hub that is proposed will work. I am also excited about the town centre team proposal and the continuing work on the integration of the front line workforce. The trouble with attending these meetings is that often you hear the same presentations, (I expect they say the same of me). I have heard the [Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service](#) chief's presentation about his proposals to work with Dorset twice now. His consultation is not yet open, but perhaps there is another way to achieve the savings he requires?

Wednesday 29 January

Operation Harness. The largest day of action yet by Wiltshire Police, mobilising 400 staff to execute 60 warrants against organised drug gangs. As it was embargoed we had a private briefing on Monday morning, but the main briefing was so big it had to be held in an empty hangar at the former RAF Lyneham base. I travelled with the press to a raid in Even Swindon, and then on to Broad Green where the community safety bus was out to give some reassurance. In that area we joined some of the teams working with partners from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Border Agency who were visiting shops. Everyone I spoke to was supportive of the action. It was good to see that Wiltshire can mount an exercise of this scale. [The results were impressive too.](#)

I have had concerns about the low number of autism awareness cards that are in circulation. This seems to have been a scheme which was launched and has lost momentum. I visited the charity [Discovering Autistic Spectrum Happiness](#) (DASH) in Swindon to whom applications are sent and there doesn't seem to be a block in that process. I will have to do some more work and establish who is now the force champion. It is said that every officer is trained and autism aware. How would I test that?

The afternoon was spent with the Police and Crime Panel looking at volunteering. The particular aspect they wanted to examine concerned the Special Constabulary. This was difficult because, although I have made the force aware of my views, they have not yet come back with their delivery plan. Of course volunteering is much broader than just the Specials, and I hope this will be clear in the volunteering strategy that we will be publishing shortly.

Off to Gloucester where my son is ill in hospital. I fear that I may have to rearrange the diary of the next couple of weeks for a bit more "me" time.

Thursday 30 January

After an emergency trip to the dentist, an excellent afternoon with the Restorative Justice Review Panel. This is a group that looks at what are known as out of court disposals to ensure they are suitable. There were quite a number of cases to look at and a few that were sent back for further review and explanation. We have to be sure that these out of court disposals are correctly used. The nature of the alleged crime is not always a good guide to the suitable disposal. I was encouraged by this first meeting I have attended, but it is a work in progress.

The Southern Area Board was held in Alderbury, and I don't think there is anywhere more southern in our county. The area board chairman had arranged for an electronic vote to be taken after my precept presentation. I was pleased that my proposals had 76 per cent approval.

Friday 31 January

First event of the day was a visit to the [safe places](#) scheme in Salisbury. Debenhams have just signed up, bringing the total number of safe places in the city to over 30. I am pleased to have funded the launch and expansion. There was a meeting in Swindon last week to launch it there and they will be joined by Warminster, Chippenham and Westbury. There is already a scheme in Devizes.

Getting to meet young people is difficult and on the day on which Wiltshire Council announced a review of Youth Services, I visited the [Salisbury Youth Partnership](#). This is an impressive project and is very much "of the community". Apprentices from the defence, aerospace and security company, Qinetiq, are involved in helping and they are actually still young themselves. One of the plans is for a [Salisbury Teenage Market](#) on Sunday 30 March in the Guildhall Square, Salisbury. This is a market at which young people can sell creative goods and services and try out business ideas. I hope to go along and use the day for consultation.

Back to Devizes for my quarterly meeting with the drug agencies. This is now a joint meeting of the providers in Swindon and Wiltshire. My particular interest is drug testing in custody as that is what I fund. It is good to

have them together and they benefited by talking to each other. The contracts are new and there are still a few things to sort out, but I was encouraged. The recurring issue is that of legal highs. They might not be illegal but their effect is criminal.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) published their [Rape Monitoring Group report](#) for 2012/13. Wiltshire has a below average recorded crime rate and an above average sanction detection rate. Like all statistics the devil is in the detail and I will use my Monday morning performance slot to dig a bit deeper.

The work on Neighbourhood Watch continues and I'm pleased that they have now agreed the platform that we will be using. At the update meeting we agreed the timetable to the summer. At the next meeting I hope I shall have a business case to sign off. It is quite exciting that this is progressing, but I think it may need a bigger boost than they are planning.

PRESSING FOR A FAIR SLICE OF THE CAKE

Posted: Monday 10th February 2014

Monday 3 February

8.30am: I had a visit from the chief executive of the [Association of Police and Crime Commissioners](#). At a recent national meeting I expressed some frustration about the support that the association was able to give to small force areas like ours. I appreciate that it is early days and that we may have got the budgeting of the new organisation wrong. But in Wiltshire, where the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is very small, a national resource – the cost of which is shared by all – is an advantage to us.

I have a meeting every two weeks about estate matters and the strategic plan is now ready to be published. I continue to be excited about developing the estate so that our buildings are equipped for the new ways of operating with technology and with our partners.

As readers may be aware, there is a major change in the world of probation, including the establishment of [rehabilitation companies](#). The director designate for our area visited to say hello. The Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, has the lead in this change. There is considerable frustration amongst my fellow Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) about the influence we will have on commissioning services in our patch. I'm having a meal in the company of the Justice Secretary next week and will be speaking to him about the feelings of PCCs in the South West and our frustrations at the direction of travel, not least the lack of influence that we, the elected representatives, will have on the choice and remit of those selected to provide the service. I have already commissioned a "prison gate" rehabilitation scheme and hope the new system will recognise the work we have already done.

The Commissioner's Monitoring Board dealt with several matters, not least the proposals for the increased precept. I was able to give the Chief Constable and his team some feedback from my meetings around the county.

William Wyldebore-Smith, the High Sheriff, came to talk about some of the projects around the county that he has visited in his year of office and particularly to commend those projects which work to reduce crime and disorder. I am pleased to work with High Sheriffs through the Crimebeat panel which also distributes to charities the money raised through the sale of police property in the county.

The final event of the day was to share my precept presentation, which I have been giving to area boards and localities, to a group of Conservative councillors in Swindon.

Tuesday 4 February

An office-based day, but with a quick foray to Erlestoke Prison to meet the governor and his senior team. It's unfortunate that we do not have a resettlement prison in Wiltshire. I now understand that our resettlement prisons will be mainly Bristol for men and Eastwood Park in Gloucestershire for women. The Erlestoke governor gave me a tour of the education facilities at the prison, including the electrical workshop where prisoners repair and refurbish kit for a well-known hire company. I am always impressed by Erlestoke Prison and the commitment of its staff to rehabilitation. The opera last year was a good example of this work.

In the evening I attended the Saraswati Puja in Swindon. It was a pleasure to join in the celebrations at the festival of the goddess of wisdom with members of the Bengali Hindu community at The Platform in Faringdon Road. There was excellent music and dance including a talented troupe from London.

Wednesday 5 February

A regular meeting in Trowbridge with the leader and senior officers of Wiltshire Council was followed by two really important sessions in Swindon. Next year I will be commissioning more services for victims, so it was really important to me that I took time out to meet individuals who have been victims of crime. In the morning we held a session at the Pilgrim Centre for victims of anti-social behaviour. In the afternoon I met some 20 ladies at Swindon Women's Aid, all of whom were survivors of domestic abuse. The lessons we learnt will be consolidated into a briefing paper to inform the commissioning process. There were two highlight messages for me: firstly victims hate having to tell their stories lots of times to different agencies. Secondly, there is a real fear of the intervention of social services for women with children in an abusive partnership.

My evening was spent in the south of the county at the South West Wilts Area Board. This was my final presentation on the precept. I noticed from their minutes that I started talking about the proposed increase in the precept back on 11 December at their previous meeting. I think we have done an amazing amount of consultation, with senior colleagues or me attending 17 area boards and localities and speaking to at least 500 people.

Thursday 6 February

Possibly the biggest day of the year in the PCC's diary! Today I sought the approval of the Police and Crime Panel for my proposed precept for 2014-15. I am very pleased that I got that support which reflected the support from the public during the consultation period.

Across the road from County Hall I spent another two hours with victims of crime, again around domestic abuse, which confirmed many of the points raised at our meeting on Wednesday. It was interesting to meet someone who had been placed in the county for her protection and to hear of her experiences of being away from her normal locality. After a drive to Gloucester to see my son in hospital it was down to Salisbury to meet the street pastors. I joined them at 10.30pm and we walked the very wet streets until around 1.30am. Notwithstanding the pouring rain and cold, they did find people the worse for wear, with precious little clothing and no shoes. I'm glad the Mayor of Salisbury has provided flip flops, as indeed was the one girl to whom a pair was given during the evening. I am pleased that a new street pastor scheme will be starting in Amesbury shortly.

Friday 7 February

As I was out so late, my office kept the morning free. At lunchtime I toured King's Park Academy in Melksham. Their school project is about a laptop "stolen" (for the purposes of the exercise) from the ICT department. The young people were very keen to tell me the clues that had already been found. I am sure the "crime" will be solved by half term ...

Looking forward to seeing my son at the weekend.

Angus Macpherson
Police and Crime Commissioner
For Wiltshire and Swindon