

WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE WILTSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEETING HELD ON 6 FEBRUARY 2014 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Glenis Ansell, Cllr Andrew Bennett, Cllr Richard Britton (Chairman), Cllr Brian Ford (Vice Chairman), Malcolm Grubb, Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr Charles Howard, Cllr Peter Hutton, Cllr Julian Johnson, Amanda Newbery, Cllr Linda Packard and Cllr Teresa Page

Also Present:

Clive Barker – Chief Finance Officer (OPCC), Cllr Trevor Carbin, Patrick Geenty - Chief Constable, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Kieran Kilgallen - Chief Executive (OPCC) and Angus Macpherson – Police and Crime Commissioner

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Dr Carlton Brand.

Mark Gwynne attended as his representative.

2 Minutes and matters arising

Decision:

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that item no. 9 would be taken before item no. 7 as the Chief Constable had to leave by 11am.

5 Public Participation

There were no questions asked or statements given.

6 PCC Diary report

The PCC's diary report was noted.

The Commissioner was questioned on the position of Neighbourhood Watch, as mentioned on Friday 20 December. He explained that this was in relation to how the project board was working, and that they were working with a Wiltshire Council project officer and OPCC support. A system had been identified and a business case would be brought forward.

Regarding his reference to the number of killed and seriously injured (KSI) on 9 January, he explained that Wiltshire was bucking the trend as other areas figures were not falling. He noted the impact that the Safe Drive, Stay Alive course had on young people and drew attention to the involvement of speedwatch in the Chief Constable's Harness day, a high visibility road policing operation.

Patrick Geenty, the Chief Constable drew attention to the impact speedwatch was having in some villages and the partnership work with Wiltshire Council and the Community Safety Partnerships in identifying highways hotspots. He noted the local and national debate on the effectiveness of speed cameras, stating that Wiltshire had seen no increase in incidents since they had been turned off. However he continued to support the use of mobile cameras.

The Commissioner explained that he had a quarterly meeting with the Head of Roads Policing where KSI figures were reported together with individual case reports. Although details were available on the age ranges involved there was no identifiable behaviours as a cause.

The Splash programme, as mentioned on 10 January and which the Chief Constable was the Chair and trustee of, used a referral system through schools and other agencies. He explained that there was a core group seen every three to four years, and once it was not needed they moved out of the programme.

The Commissioner noted the constructive work with the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) and highlighted the variety of approaches being taken nationally. He would take note of best practice on how the OPCC relates to CSPs and would clarify the relationship over time. The relationship between the CSPs and local safety forums in towns and villages would be driven by the CSP.

Regarding his reference to his attendance at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 January, the Commissioner expressed his pleasure at being a member and viewed it as a key board going forward. He acknowledged the link between health and low level crime, and would be presenting two reports to the next Health and Wellbeing Board on health and mental health issues in custody.

The Swindon Health and Wellbeing Board runs in parallel with the Wiltshire Board and had already seen links with Neighbourhood Watch and the use of their Neighbourhood Alert system to put out health messages.

7 Formal consideration of the PCC's proposed precept for 2014-15

The Commissioner introduced his precept proposal, drawing attention to the detailed information already presented to the Panel at the 15 January meeting which gave further details.

He noted the need for careful use of language as it was the police precept which was being debated and not council tax which was determined by a different organisation doing different work.

He detailed his extensive public consultation through a variety of means including email, media and visiting the locality meetings and area boards throughout the county. 130 responses had been received and over half had been in support of his proposal.

The advice of the Chief Constable and the OPCC Chief Finance Officer had also been considered in the paper before the Panel today. The Commissioner noted that the Chief Constable had asked for a 10% increase to be consulted on which would provide more money for policing.

An additional investment in the National Crime Agency had seen available grants further topsliced, in addition to contributions to the IPCC, HMIC and the Minister's Innovation Fund, and his proposal was to increase the local tax base which would allow policing to be maintained in the face of further government cuts.

The difference in the balance of funding between local authorities was explained with Wiltshire 60% funded by local taxation and 40% national funding and Swindon 52% funded by local taxation and 48% national. This was compared to the OPCC which was 64% funded by government grants and only 36% funded locally.

The effect of grant cuts was disproportionate with the spending level being reduced by 6% to 7% for Wiltshire and Swindon against a reduction of nearer 12% for the OPCC.

He drew attention to the difficulty in consulting when the referendum threshold limit was unknown, and there was no certainty on the future of freeze grants.

In responding to a query on reserves he drew attention to the reserves paper that was circulated at the meeting (and attached to these minutes). £2.5 million was being put into estates transformation reserves and any money made from the move out of the Salisbury Police Station would be re-invested in the estate and new accommodation.

Clive Barker, Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the 1.99% increase would generate £770,000, and explained that the strategy was to allow funding to be available in the future as there was no certainty on the future of the freeze grant, which was worth £400,000.

He explained that reserves were projected to decrease over the next three years as capital projects will not be completed by the end of the first year. There was no statutory requirement on the level of reserves held however it was maintained at a level of 3% to 5%. The general reserves had decreased by 1% due to reviewing risk.

Policing numbers would be maintained at 1000, however the management structure was being reduced and the Chief Constable's operation review had not been finalised so this was a working assumption. There would be no reduction in PCSO numbers and these may be increased in the future.

The Commissioner was asked about the credibility and public perception of setting the precept at 1.99% knowing that the referendum threshold limit was 2%, and he explained that he had consistently consulted on a figure of £3.15 or £3 for three years to protect frontline policing, and not a percentage figure.

When asked what the impact in terms of delivery the additional 8% would have had a 10% increase had been consulted on the Commissioner explained that there would be no increase in money, only a reduction in savings.

There were no public questions asked.

The Panel debated the credibility and perception of the 1.99% increase. They appreciated that the public perception on the proposal being the maximum permitted without triggering a referendum could be viewed negatively and voiced concern on the effect to neighbourhood policing.

They welcomed the extensive consultation carried out and supported the Commissioners view that the government's delay in announcing details of the referendum threshold and freeze grant frustrating and unhelpful in his efforts to consult communities

It was noted that in the short term the Commissioner had ample reserves to cover the difference between the freeze grant and the income generated by the proposal. The Commissioner's focus was long term and sought to build the tax base and reduce the savings, making savings easier to find.

Decision

The Panel voted to support the Commissioner's proposed increase to the police precept.

8 Police accountability Landscape review

The Chairman introduced the item and invited questions from the panel.

When asked if engagement with the public had increased as detailed in paragraph 6 of the report the Commissioner confirmed this was the case and referred to the extensive consultation carried out on the precept proposal.

A working relationship, like the one he had with the Chief Constable was very important. He was asked what would not be delivered given that the Constable had requested a 10% precept proposal to deliver his strategy. In response the Commissioner explained that there was no single aspect of the police service that would not continue to be delivered. Wiltshire Constabulary was one of the top performing in the country presently and the Chief Constable wanted to make fewer savings, not stop delivery. An efficiency strategy was in place to address the need to find £4 million savings each year over the next three years, with ideas on where they would come from, however it was not an easy task.

When questioned on the publication of data as detailed in paragraph 14 in the report Kieran Kilgallen, the OPCC Chief Executive explained that an audit had been conducted, and work was ongoing in one area of non-compliance relating to contracts. £40,000 had been put towards a regional procurement office.

In commenting on the results of the British Crime Survey mentioned in paragraph 2.3 in part two of the report the Commissioner was pleased and not surprised that people were more aware of his position. He noted the need to increase public awareness in the 'and Crime' aspect of his work, for example around victim support, which the annual report addressed.

Kieran detailed the work done with the constabulary to make decisions faster, reducing the number of meetings officer had to attend and creating a non-combatitive environment.

9 Accuracy of the police-recorded crime figures

This item was taken after item 6 as detailed in the Chairman's announcement.

The Commissioner explained that problems around the accuracy of police-recorded crime figures had been know as far back as 2006. A task group had been set up in May 2013 to investigate and audit Wiltshire's figures resulting in the process being altered over a period of time. Resources were strengthened; figures reviewed much earlier, screening officers now sat alongside call handlers and the force registrar reported independently all of which resulted in significant improvements in recording.

The Chief Constable explained that the Home Office rules on recording were highly complex and were open to interpretation. He felt that the crime recording

process was the most robust and audited in any country. In Wiltshire the previous target driven culture had led to unforeseen consequences and he was moving away from this, using the data as an indicator and taking into account a host of other factors to manage performance which will deliver a quality of service with confidence.

The presumption that a response to an incident moves it in to the category of investigation was highlighted, and demonstrated the lack of clarity on the process. Should the reporter of the crime not be provided with a progress update the appearance of nothing being done was given. The Chief Constable explained that he did not have the resource to fully investigate every crime, and reports were screened with 30-40% of total reported crime investigated.

A question was asked on whether crime figures could be weighted by communities and made clearer and more meaningful, and the Chief Constable explained that he felt the public distrusted the figures, and it was more important to provide quality policing.

The Commissioner highlighted that interpretation and context were key, and whilst Wiltshire had seen a 7% decrease in absolute numbers in September these did not include fraud or cyber-related crimes which were reported from the City of London.

Attention was drawn to the different thresholds in charging standards, with the example given of the force recording a crime as GBH and the Crown Prosecution Service downgrading it to an ABH charge. This was a known issue nationally.

When asked the two questions that were asked to the Kent force as detailed in the HMIC report the Chief Constable confirmed that all crime was recorded appropriately and he was confident that it would stand scrutiny. There was no pressure to reduce figures and no incentive to fiddle the figures. The cultural change to values and behaviours with confidence and satisfaction in the force was shown to be working and this message was working its way down to frontline officers.

Kieran Kilgallen, OPCC Chief Executive noted that the HMIC questions had been through the Kent PCC which was the correct route for the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account.

The Panel thanked the Commissioner for attending.

10 **Volunteers and Specials scrutiny review update**

Malcolm Grubb, leader of the volunteers and specials scrutiny working group presented an update to the panel.

He explained that the group had met in early December and developed a project plan. This identified key people to interview and detailed questions were agreed.

These interviews were now complete and had been very helpful and constructive. They had identified three key pieces of work that were currently being undertaken. These were:

- A volunteer strategy by the Chief Constable, which was currently in draft format and which had just been shared with working group members had been given access to
- A review of the Special Constabulary which a preliminary draft report contained approximately 50 recommendations
- Neighbourhood Alert, a system that Neighbourhood Watch had identified and a business case for its procurement was being worked
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The group would be meeting next week to determine the next steps and possible further interviews.

When asked why it was not showing on the forward work plan Malcolm explained that the working group meeting next week would identify the best date.

11 **Forward Work Plan**

The Panel noted the forward work plan.

The Chairman asked to be informed on agenda item suggestions or areas of interest.

12 **Any other business**

iQuanta

A question was raised on the progress of iQuanta access for panel members.

Kieran explained that the National Audit Office had pulled approval for the police statistics one month ago. Access to iQuanta had been withdrawn for Community Safety Partnerships, and data on most similar forces was not allowed to be shared until it was six months old.

He suggested that the Panel may wish to comment on this. He would keep the panel informed of developments and the quarterly data due at the next panel meeting scheduled for 6 March would contain the most up to date information available.

Crime figures

The Panel requested that crime figures reported in the quarterly data be broken down into the groups seen in Appendix A to the Police and Crime Plan.

Officers will work together on how this will look.

OPCC Investment Strategy

In response to a question raised at the Panel's 15 January meeting Clive confirmed that the OPCC did invest outside the UK but only in a secure environment. A list of these investments would be provided to officers to circulate.

13 Future meeting dates

The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be on Thursday 6 March, 2pm at Council Chamber - Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham, SN15 1ER

Future meeting dates were:

11 June 2014, 2pm at Wessex Room, Corn Exchange, Market Place, Devizes SN10 1HS

4 September 2014, 2pm at Alamein Suite - City Hall, Malthouse Lane, Salisbury, SP2 7TU

19 November 2014, 10am at Committee Room VI, Civic Office Swindon.

(Duration of meeting: 10.03 am - 12.15 pm)

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