

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Wednesday, 2nd May, 2018 at Council Chamber, Wyvern House,
The Drummer, Winsford, CW7 1AH

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East Councillors S Edgar, JP Findlow and M Warren

Cheshire West & Chester Councillors A Dawson and M Delaney

Warrington Councillors J Davidson and B Maher

Independent Co-optees: Mr R Fousert (Deputy Chairman),
Mrs S Hardwick and Mr E Morris.

Officers: Mr D Dickinson, Mr B Reed and Mr M Smith,
Cheshire East Council.

In the absence of Councillor Howard Murray the meeting was chaired by Mr Robert Fousert, Deputy Chairman.

119 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Howard Murray (Cheshire East Council) and Councillor Amanda King (Warrington Borough Council). Councillor Mick Warren attended in place of Councillor Murray and Councillor Jan Davidson in place of Councillor King.

120 **CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS. RELEVANT AUTHORITIES (DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS) REGULATIONS 2012**

There were no declarations of interest.

121 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public who wished to speak or ask questions.

The Deputy Chairman reminded those in attendance and those watching via the webcast that questions could be submitted in advance of the meeting.

122 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2018 were approved as a correct record, with two minor amendments being made. It was noted that

Mrs Sally Hardwick had been in attendance and that the Commissioner had been accompanied by Mr Gareth Burrows, not Mr Ben McCrorie.

The Deputy Chairman asked that the written answer provided by the Commissioner to a question he had asked was made available to the public. This would be done via the Panel's page of the Cheshire East Council website.

123 **DATES AND LOCATIONS OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Panel agreed the pattern, dates and venue for meetings for the period up to February 2019, noting that the meeting proposed for Friday 14th December would take place at Runcorn Town Hall.

Councillor Andrew Dawson highlighted the issue raised by the timing of all out elections in both Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East in May 2019. A meeting of the Panel had been proposed for 12th April 2019, the Secretariat were asked to find an alternative date for this meeting, in advance of the pre-election period before the May 2019 local elections.

124 **SCRUTINY ITEMS**

The Panel noted the minutes of the Scrutiny Board held in December 2017.

Concerns were raised that Panel members were not receiving the advance notice of meetings from the Commissioner's Office that they had been accustomed to in the past.

125 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - QUESTIONS FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Chairman welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting and noted that Panel members would not, at the current meeting, be asking questions about the Chief Constable's ongoing Disciplinary Hearing, but that once the matter had been concluded, the Panel would wish to meet with him to discuss the issue in detail.

The Commissioner noted that this was the Panel's first meeting since it had endorsed his budget proposals for 2018/19, for which he had been very grateful. He also noted that the initiative to provide one PCSO per community had been fully agreed and was in the process of being rolled out. Most PCSOs would have a base in their community; in very many cases this was being provided at no cost to the Constabulary.

The Commissioner noted that Mrs Elizabeth Lunn, his former Finance Officer had now retired after many years service to the Cheshire community. A recruitment process was underway which would lead to the Panel needing to hold a Confirmation Hearing. He noted that Mrs Lunn's

successor would be appointed with a revised job description, on a lower salary.

Councillor Findlow sought clarification over the person appointed to replace Mrs Lunn, noting that she had been employed on a part-time basis. The Commissioner confirmed that her successor would have a wider remit and would be employed on a lower grade, as they would be contracted on a full time basis the actual cost of employment was likely to be higher.

Mr Evan Morris asked the Commissioner for information on the process that had been followed to recruit to the post of Finance Officer. The Commissioner briefly outlined the process, which had included seeking professional HR advice in advance of the vacancy being advertised.

Councillor Thompson asked the Commissioner if the costs associated with the suspension of the Chief Constable would be met from Cheshire Constabulary budgets, or whether it would be necessary to approach the Home Office for additional funding. The Commissioner replied that the position was being closely monitored and that relevant financial and legal advice would be taken as appropriate.

Councillor Andrew Dawson asked the Commissioner how many officers within the Constabulary were acting up as a consequence of the Chief Constable's suspension. The Commissioner confirmed that a number of Officers were acting up and he would provide additional information in writing. The Chairman sought clarification over the cost of such arrangements, the Commissioner responded by confirming that due process was being followed.

Councillor Findlow asked the Commissioner to reflect on the appointment of his Deputy Commissioner, noting that Ms Dirir who had been appointed in the spring of 2017 had now left. The Commissioner responding by saying that her appointment had represented excellent value for money and that she had led in a number of key areas, including the equality agenda, Domestic Violence (including the white ribbon campaign) and the introduction of the Living Wage. The Commissioner noted that Ms Dirir had helped transform the operation of his office and helped introduce financial savings. The Chairman asked what contribution she had made to the reduction of crime across Cheshire. The Commissioner responded by saying that this had not been her role.

Mrs Hardwick asked for clarification on a number of areas where the Commissioner had indicated that his former Deputy had made a positive contribution, namely domestic violence and rape cases. Referring to the performance statistics Mrs Hardwick noted that the number of reported cases were increasing whilst successful prosecutions were falling. She asked how the Commissioner was responding to this now that his Deputy had left his Employment.

The Commissioner responded by saying that his former Deputy had a particular interest in these issues and had done a lot to hold the Constabulary to account over their performance. He noted that his office provided funding to support those who were victims of sexual assault and rape, together with work on prevention. In addition his Office campaigned for external funding in these areas of activity.

The Chairman asked the Commissioner for clarification over the advance notice provided to Panel members over the dates, times and locations of Scrutiny Meetings. The Commissioner clarified the position.

Councillor Jan Davidson asked the Commissioner if he agreed with the former Home Secretary that reduced budgets for the Police had no impact on crime rates. He replied by saying that he disagreed, noting that the large reduction (38 per cent) in funding for the Police in Cheshire was having a detrimental impact on crime rates.

Councillor Andrew Dawson, referring to the recently published Police statistics asked the Commissioner if he understood them, referring specifically to a figures showing that 104 percent of suspects had been identified. The Commissioner responded by saying that he did understand the figures, but that he would seek clarification from the Constabulary on the particular detailed statistic referred to by Councillor Dawson. The Chair also sought clarification over the number of suspects identified in relation to Child Sexual Abuse. The Commissioner indicated that it would be appreciated if questions that required detailed answers were put in advance of the Panel's meeting. Mrs Hardwick sought clarity over a number of key statistics where the reported crime rates were increasing. The Commissioner promised to provide further information to Panel members on these issues; but noted that many of the increases in relation to Domestic Violence, Child Sexual Exploitation and rape were due to historical cases being included in the statistics.

The Commissioner reassured the Panel that Cheshire remained one of the safest places in the country to live, with recorded crime been the twelfth lowest of all Police areas.

Mrs Hardwick asked the Commissioner if he thought that there was a correlation between the number of missing children and cases of Child Sexual Exploitation. The Commissioner indicated that he had asked the Constabulary to undertake further research into this issue and that he would be surprised if there were not some correlation.

Councillor Andrew Dawson asked the Commissioner for clarification over the increase in cases of reported crime. The Commissioner confirmed that some of the increase was due to improved recording, but that elements were due to increases in certain types of crime; for example shoplifting due to societal changes.

Councillor Dawson also asked the Commissioner if members of the Panel could attend his Scrutiny Meetings and ask questions of the Constabulary. The Commissioner indicated that this would not be possible, but that he actively encouraged Panel Members to attend such meetings and asked them to let him know of areas where they would like him to ask questions of the Police.

Councillor Dawson asked the Commissioner if he would encourage the Acting Chief Constable to attend a meeting of the Panel, by invitation. In reply the Commissioner invited Councillor Dawson to attend a Scrutiny Meeting and said that he would seek advice on the attendance of an Acting Chief Constable at a Panel meeting.

Mr Evan Morris referred to a discussion at a previous meeting (1st December 2018) of the Panel where it had been indicated that women were being accommodated in Styal Prison due to the lack of sanctuary accommodation in the community. He asked the Commissioner for clarification on this issue. The Commissioner indicated that he had been informed that in no circumstances were women housed in the prison solely as a place of safety. However, the Commissioner was of the view that there was not enough sanctuary accommodation in the community and that he had asked the Acting Chief Constable to undertake more research into this important issue. Mrs Hardwick informed the Panel that from her experience the number of reported cases of Domestic Violence were increasing and that the number of sanctuary places was decreasing.

The Chairman asked what steps the Commissioner had made to ensure that knife crime did not become an increasing threat to the Cheshire community. The Commissioner responding by indicating that Cheshire had one of the lowest number of reported cases of knife crime in the country. The figure for the previous year had been 336, which represented an increase of approximately ten percent on the year before. The figures in Cheshire were significantly lower than the North West average. The majority of knife crime in Cheshire was in Runcorn, Widnes, Macclesfield and Ellesmere Port. The Commissioner outlined the steps that the Cheshire Constabulary were taking to combat such crime; this included introducing surrender bins and operating an amnesty. The Constabulary had also worked with the Council's Trading Standards Service in Halton and had also visited many schools across the county. Cheshire had also contributed to the Government's consultation on its Serious Violent Crime Strategy. He was of the view that Cheshire Constabulary were undertaking good work in this area, but that overall success depended on the work of many different agencies.

Councillor Dave Thompson observed that he had attended a meeting earlier in the day where the Acting Chief Constable had indicated that knife crime also took place in the home and that success in combating it was dependent on successful multi agency work.

Mr Evan Morris noted that at the Scrutiny meeting the Commissioner had expressed concern at the decrease in enforcement action in relation to speeding. He noted that the Fire and Rescue Service had approximately 200 uniformed volunteers who could possibly be employed to assist with this activity. He asked the Commissioner for his views on such an approach. The Commissioner indicated that the Constabulary had told him that road safety was about much more than speed enforcement, including such things as drug testing and enforcement of seat belt and mobile phone use legislation. He indicated that he wanted to change the culture in relation to speeding, with enforcement being undertaken on a much wider range of roads. PCSOs would make a major contribution to this; he wished to see each PCSO spending at least an hour a week on speed enforcement. Mr Morris commented that the current approach to speed enforcement across Cheshire appeared to be fractured, and in his opinion that better use could be made of volunteers.

The Chairman asked for clarification in relation to rural crime; indicating that he was attending a meeting on the subject the following week. He asked the Commissioner what reassurance he could give the meeting that such crime was being addressed across Cheshire. The Commissioner assured the Chairman that priority was being given to rural crime and that work was being undertaken with the farming and wider rural communities in relation to crime prevention. He noted that PCSOs had a key role to play in combatting such crime.

126 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel's work programme was reviewed