

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 14th December, 2018 at Council Chamber, Runcorn Town
Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn WA7 5TG

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East Council	Councillors JP Findlow, M Warren and J Weatherill
Cheshire West and Chester	Councillors M Delaney, L Riley and D Armstrong
Halton	Councillor D Thompson
Warrington	Councillors J Davidson and B Maher
Independent Co-optees	Mr B Fousert (Chairman) and Mrs S Hardwick

Officers in attendance:

Mr B Reed and Mr M Smith, Secretariat, Cheshire East Council

35 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors A Dawson, N Plumpton-Walsh, S Edgar and Mr E Morris MBE.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

37 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public who wished to speak were in attendance.

38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2018 were approved as a correct record.

39 VISIT TO CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY'S OCCUPATION HEALTH UNIT

Mrs Sally Hardwick and Mr Bob Fousert briefed the Panel on their recent visit to the Constabulary's Occupational Health Unit. They indicated that they had been impressed with the work that the Unit undertook, but recognised that there was a challenge in reducing levels of sickness, and that the Unit was working under difficult circumstances. Councillor Riley noted that there was an opportunity to better understand the factors that led to sickness and absence, enabling the Constabulary to use this information to change organisational culture.

Councillor Warren noted that as the retirement age for Police Officers had been raised it was likely that sickness levels would increase. Both Mrs Hardwick and Councillor Davidson noted that mental health issues now impacted one in four of the adult population and that this increasing trend was likely to be reflected in Police Officer and civilian staff sickness levels.

40 OUTCOME OF FORMER CHIEF CONSTABLE'S GROSS MISCONDUCT HEARING

The Chairman welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting. He indicated that once the Commissioner had made a statement about the outcome of the former Chief Constable's Gross Misconduct Hearing, the Panel would not ask questions on the issue. The meeting on 8th February would be extended to review this issue in detail.

The Commissioner indicated that he would have been prepared to discuss the issue in detail at the meeting. He stressed that at all times he had been open and transparent and wished to assist the Panel with its work.

41 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER - QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Mr Bob Fousert requested that the Commissioner provide more up to date information on scrutiny, noting that the latest papers on his website were some four months old. The Commissioner indicated that the Minutes of the November Scrutiny meeting would not be approved until the next meeting, but that he welcomed a discussion on whether Minutes could be released in draft form. Councillor Findlow indicated that in his view there was nothing to prevent Minutes being released in draft before that were formally approved.

Councillor Mick Warren asked the Commissioner for clarification over what records existed for speed enforcement activity, noting that in response to a Freedom of Information request he had been informed by the Constabulary that information on activity in Macclesfield was not recorded. The Commissioner indicated that he would hold the Constabulary to

account for the answer that they had provided to Councillor Warren, but noted that published data indicated that in a six-month period, 256 “TrueCam” sessions had been undertaken in the Macclesfield area.

Mr Bob Fousert noted that at the last Scrutiny meeting information had been provided on the outcome of a short-term project relating the safety of commercial vehicles, where 7 out of 53 vehicles stopped had either not been roadworthy or were being driven by a driver who was over their permitted hours. If these figures were extrapolated nationally it could indicate that almost 60,000 vehicles a day were being driven whilst un-roadworthy or by drivers who had exceeded their hours. He asked the Commissioner what he would do to address this issue. The Commissioner indicated that work was ongoing, but was limited by the resources available.

Mrs Sally Hardwick asked for further information on the Mini Policing scheme that had featured on the Commissioner’s 2018 Christmas card. The Commissioner indicated that there were currently no plans to extend the scheme. In Runcorn the initiative had been developed by a very proactive and hard working PCSO. It was one of a number of schemes to help children and young people engage in a proactive way with the Constabulary. Costs for the scheme had been minimal. The Commissioner committed to working with the Acting Chief Constable on a range of initiatives that would engage with children and young people.

Councillor Lynn Riley noted the success of the Junior Safety Programme in Cheshire West and Chester, asking how this could fit in with the Mini Policing scheme. She paid tribute to the PCSO who operated within her Ward (Frodsham) who played a key role in a number of community initiatives. She asked for the Commissioner’s support for the introduction of CCTV in Frodsham.

The Commissioner commented that the Mini Policing scheme could complement the Junior Safety Programme, but repeated that there were currently no plans to expand it. He noted that CCTV had a role to play, but was by no means a universal solution. Where appropriate, relevant and supported by other agencies, such as Town Councils, he was happy to consider contributing through the Community Safety Fund to the installation of new CCTV systems.

Councillor Paul Findlow asked the Commissioner for his observations on the announcement made the previous day in relation to increased Police funding. He particularly asked for clarification on the funding available to recruit and retain Detectives.

The Commissioner indicated that the headline figure quoted by Ministers was greatly exaggerated, with some of the “new” money quoted relating to the ability for local precepts to be increased; this would be subject to consultation that had not yet commenced. The Commissioner stressed that in his view Cheshire required a properly funded public sector. He

indicated that there was a national shortage of detectives, especially in specialist areas, but that he was working with senior managers within the Constabulary to address the problem. One potential solution was to recruit more civilian investigators.

Mr Bob Fousert noted that at a national level a number of senior Police Officers, including the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, had indicated the Police were becoming a depository for all of society's ills. The Commissioner welcomed initiatives made by particular local authorities, such as Cheshire East's mental health initiative, but thought that they would only have a limited impact. He praised the work of the Cheshire Criminal Justice Board, but indicated that there was no substitute for a well resourced Police service.

Mr Bob Fousert stated that he was of the view that those suffering with mental health problems, who had not committed an offence, should not be held in custody. The Commissioner agreed, noting that excellent progress had been made and suggesting that this was perhaps an issue that the Panel could return to. Councillor Jan Davidson, speaking as a mental health practitioner, noted that lack of resources was a very significant issue.

Councillor Dave Thompson asked what steps the Commissioner was taking to hold the Acting Chief Constable to account following the recent imprisonment of a serving Cheshire Police Officer for very serious sexual offences. The Commissioner informed the Panel that he had asked the Acting Chief Constable to provide a comprehensive briefing on this issue.

Councillor Dave Thompson asked the Commissioner if he would be asking the Home Office to contribute to the cost of the recent disciplinary case into the Chief Constable. The Commissioner indicated that it was necessary to have a robust process to look into complaints. Whilst he would welcome external funding from the Home Office he thought that it was unlikely to be offered.

Councillor Mick Warren asked for the Commissioner's views on parking on pavements, and what steps, if any, PCSOs could take. The Commissioner noted that it should be possible for people with double buggies and wheel chairs to use pavements freely and safely. He commented that, in three of the four Cheshire local authority areas, parking enforcement had been decriminalised, and was now a civil issue. The Police only had responsibility for cases of obstruction. He felt that across Cheshire, PCSOs took a proportionate response to this issue, but could not address all cases.

Mr Bob Fousert asked the Commissioner for his observations on the increase in the number of Hunt-related incidents in Cheshire. The Commissioner told the Panel that he had commissioned an independent review on this issue. In the New Year he would be holding a public meeting, where those who had undertaken the review would present their

findings. Panel members would be invited. He would also be holding a meeting where he would scrutinise the Constabulary on this issue. Mr Fousert asked for clarity over the status of the Cheshire Rural and Wildlife Crime Strategy and its relationship with the recent work on Hunt related crime. The Commissioner indicated that the Strategy could be amended following ongoing work on this issue.

Councillor Paul Findlow sought clarification over the timetable for the appointment of a new Chief Constable and whether there would be an adequate field of candidates. The Commissioner noted that he had engaged the services of the independent College of Policing to administer the process and provide advice to him. The closing date had passed and shortlisting would take place shortly. He outlined the process that would be followed. The Chair of the Panel had been invited to act as an observer.

42 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel's work programme was reviewed. The informal meeting with the Commissioner in January would discuss DBS Clearance and the process of Police Recruitment.

43 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as being on 8th February 2019.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.45 am

Mr B Fousert (Chairman)