

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 14th June, 2019 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East	Councillors A Critchley, JP Findlow and M Warren
Cheshire West and Chester	Councillors M Delaney and L Riley
Halton	Councillors N Plumpton Walsh and D Thompson
Warrington	Councillors J Davidson and B Maher
Independent Co-optees	Mr B Fousert (Chairman) , Mrs S Hardwick and Mr E Morris
Officers	Mr B Reed and Mr M Smith (Secretariat, Cheshire East Council)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Dawson, who was represented by Councillor Lynn Riley and Councillor Rob Bissett.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2019/20 MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED:

That Mr Bob Fousert be elected as Chairman.

3 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2019/20 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Mr Evan Morris and Councillor Andrew Dawson were both nominated and seconded for the position of Deputy Chairman and the nominations were put to the vote.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Evan Morris be appointed as Deputy Chairman.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

6 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th March were reviewed.

The Chairman noted that the issue of Police recruitment practices would be taken up with the Commissioner later in the meeting.

Councillor Anthony Critchley sought clarification over the report prepared in relation to the Chief Constable's disciplinary process. The Chairman clarified that the Panel were only being asked to approve the accuracy of the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2019.

The Panel noted that the meeting originally planned for Friday 10th April 2020 would now be held the previous week, on Friday 3rd April.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2019 be approved as a correct record.

7 PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The Panel noted the nominations made for the 2019/20 Municipal year by the four Cheshire local authorities.

Mr Evan Morris had originally been appointed to serve on the Panel for a two-year term, up to 30 September 2019. The Chairman sought the Panel's views on reappointing Mr Morris to the Panel.

RESOLVED

That Mr Evan Morris be appointed to serve for a further three years, taking his term of office up to 30th September 2022.

8 CHESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL BUDGET 2019/20

The Panel reviewed the proposed budget for 2019/20, seeking clarification over the way in which the costs of supporting the Panel were calculated. It was noted that the grant received from the Home Office had not increased for a number of years.

The Panel thanked Officers for the support that they had provided during the previous year.

RESOLVED

That the Panel's budget for 2019/20 be approved.

9 PANEL ARRANGEMENTS: RULES OF PROCEDURE

Consideration was given to a report relating to the re-adoption of the governance arrangements and Rules of Procedure for the Panel. It was considered good practice for the Panel to review and readopt its governance arrangements and Rules of Procedure annually.

Mr Evan Morris and Councillor Dave Thompson sought clarification over the powers that the Panel had in relation to the suspension of a Chief Constable by the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Secretariat was asked to provide background information to Panel members on the status of and limitations to the Panel's Procedure Rules.

Councillor Paul Findlow asked for clarification over the status of the Sub Committee that had been established late in 2018 to review the way in which the Panel managed complaints. The Chairman explained that the work of this Sub Committee had been delayed whilst the Panel undertook work in relation to the suspension of the former Chief Constable. Now that task was complete, the work of the Sub Committee would be programmed.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 the Panel adopt the Rules of Procedure for the 2019/20 Municipal year.
- 2 the Head of Democratic Services and Governance be authorised to make any changes during the year to the Rules of Procedure as he considers are necessary to give effect to the wishes of the Panel.

10 ATTENDANCE AT THE EIGHTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR POLICE AND CRIME PANELS

Members of the Panel were asked to inform the Secretariat if they wished to attend the conference.

RESOLVED

That five Panel members attend the conference.

11 CHANGING PATTERNS OF VIOLENT CRIME: THE IMPACT ON POLICY, POLICING AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Evan Morris updated the Panel on his attendance at a national conference on changing patterns of violent crime.

12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSION

The Chairman welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting. The Commissioner congratulated the Chairman and Deputy Chairman on their appointments.

The Commissioner congratulated Mr Tony Spruce, a PCSO on his award of a BEM is the Queen's Birthday Honours. He also congratulated Mr Mark Watson, a retired Police Officer, who currently worked as a volunteer supporting Crime Beat who had been awarded an MBE. The Panel added their congratulations to those of the Commissioner.

The Commissioner updated the Panel on a number of recent achievements by Cheshire Constabulary, including a major drugs related prosecution and an arrest in Malta of a suspect who had been wanted by the Constabulary for over 16 years in relation to murder. He also updated the Panel on the ongoing collaborative work with the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Commissioner informed the Panel that the issue of the Constabulary's recruitment policies, especially as they relate to fairness, transparency and inclusivity had been discussed at the last Scrutiny Meeting, at which two members of the Panel has been attendance. He informed the Panel that he intended to hold a special Scrutiny meeting on this issue. This was likely to be held during the first two weeks of July and would be open to the public.

The Chairman sought the views of the Commissioner on senior Police Officers wearing distinctive rainbow lanyards supporting LGBT awareness. He asked whether this was consistent with the need for Police Officers to be seen to be independent. His question had in part been prompted by seeing the newly appointed Deputy Chief Constable wearing such a lanyard, which he saw as a political act and therefore in breach of Police Regulations. He also referred to a recent article in Police Insight magazine which had discussed this issue and the perceived erosion of Police independence.

The Commissioner responded by saying that the Deputy Chief Constable was the national lead on LGBT+ issues. He said that the wearing of rainbow lanyards was common practice, demonstrating support for the LGBT+ community and equality in general. Staff wearing such lanyards had his full support and he expressed concern at the question that the Chairman had asked. A number of Panel members expressed support for Police Officers who wore rainbow lanyards and other actions taken by the Constabulary to promote LGTB+ rights. They did not see such actions as being political.

Mr Morris noted that equalities had many strands to it. Whilst he saw it as important to support the LGTB+ community (and referred to work he had undertaken in this area when he was employed by the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service), he saw it as important that all minorities were heard and received equal treatment.

The Commissioner indicated that he supported both Chester Pride and Cheshire East's Pride in the Park, which would be held in Crewe in July. He would be attending both events and invited Panel members to accompany him.

Councillor Paul Findlow asked the Commissioner for his observations on the Panel's report in relation to the suspension of the former Chief Constable. The Commissioner responded by saying that he had received a copy of the report on 28th May and would reply when he had reflected fully on the Panel's findings and not later than a month after receipt.

Councillor Lynn Riley sought clarification from the Commissioner over how much of his time he had spent canvassing for his political party in the period running up to the local elections in early May, and whether he would publish his diary for the six-week period running up to those elections.

The Commissioner indicated that he would not answer questions as to what he did in his own private time, noting that whilst campaigning he had experienced serious invasions of his privacy, which he found totally unacceptable. He told the Panel that he took his elected role very seriously, devoting a considerable amount of time to it, week in and week out.

Councillor Riley asked how resources would be allocated to those areas of Cheshire that were experiencing rising crime rates. The Commissioner outlined his approach to resource allocation, encouraging communities to make bids to his Safer Communities Fund. He also highlighted the contribution that Proceeds of Crime funding could make across Cheshire.

Mr Bob Fousert raised the issue of the lack of information available on the Commissioner's website about how he spent his time; an issue that he had raised at previous meetings. The Commissioner responded by saying that his office would shortly be getting a new website (as part of a national initiative "Single Online Home") which would enable more information to be shared with the public in an easy to access form.

The Commissioner noted that he had served as a Warrington Councillor since 1999 and that he would be standing down from that role at the next election in 2020.

Councillor Mick Warren asked the Commissioner for clarification over his policy of one PCSO per community, especially in relation to cover

arrangements for sickness and annual leave. He understood that in some areas there were no pool staff available to provide cover.

The Commissioner indicated that he had raised this issue with the Chief Constable and that he was satisfied that the necessary HR policies were in place to ensure that vacancies were filled. However, he did recognise that it was an area not without its challenges and that he would continue to monitor the situation. He did indicate that Cheshire was seen as a leader nationally in relation to community policing.

Mrs Sally Hardwick congratulated the former Chief Constable, Simon Byrne on his appointment as Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Mrs Hardwick indicated that she was still unhappy with the Commissioner's complaints procedure, an issue over which she had taken an interest over a considerable period of time. She recognised that it would be some time before this could be resolved.

The Commissioner noted that this was a national issue, progress had been slower than he would have hoped, with Parliamentary time being spent on other issues. He noted that definitions of complaints were changing, which could create resource pressures. He offered to hold a workshop with the Panel before he decided on which model of complaints handling he would adopt. The changes were likely to have workload implications for the Police and Crime Panel. There was agreement that Mrs Hardwick would lead on this issue for the Panel.

Mrs Hardwick asked the Commissioner what was being done to follow up on the recommendations made by the Youth Commission, and also what steps were being made to involve harder to reach young people in the process.

The Commissioner outlined the way in which he engaged with young people, including the Youth Commission, which he had established. Whilst recognising that there was progress to make, he felt that the Commission was more representative than it had been. Stop and search and mental health had been amongst the issues raised by the Youth Commission. The Commissioner offered to provide further information on the work of the Commission and their recommendations.

Councillor David Thompson sought clarification on Community Safety funding across Cheshire. The Commissioner indicated that he would continue to fund Community Safety Partnerships, but that there would be greater coordination and a need to link outcomes to sub regional priorities. He noted that he was providing additional resources to fund a problem-solving team to work with local authorities to focus on the greatest priorities.

13 SCRUTINY ITEMS

Councillor Paul Findlow sought clarification over how best the Panel should approach the issue of responding to the high volume of scrutiny papers available on the Commissioner's website. The Secretariat was asked to produce a short discussion paper for consideration at the September meeting of the Panel.

14 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted. The Panel noted that the membership and proportionality of the group that would review complaints would need to be reviewed following the elections.

The proposed dates of the informal meetings with the Commissioner were noted, the Secretariat were asked to approach the Commissioner with a view to moving the proposed August meet back to early September. Panel members suggested that future informal meetings consider performance data and joint working with the Fire and Rescue Service.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Police and Crime Panel was confirmed as being held on Friday 20th September at Runcorn Town Hall.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.25 pm

Mr B Fousert (Chairman)