

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 24th September, 2021 in the Council Chamber, Municipal
Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East: Councillors J Paul Findlow and Mick Warren

Cheshire West & Chester: Councillors Robert Bisset, Martyn Delaney and
Lynn Riley

Halton: Councillors Martha Lloyd Jones and Peter Lloyd
Jones

Warrington: Councillors Kenneth Critchley and Jane Whalen

Independent Co-optees: Mrs Sally Hardwick and Mr Evan Morris MBE

Officers: Mr Martin Smith, Cheshire East Council

25 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh and Mr
Bob Fousert.

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

No issues were raised.

27 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to speak at the meeting, but Mr
Matt Hicks, a resident of Alsager had submitted a question in advance of
the meeting which was read out by the Secretariat. Mr Hicks raised
concerns about antisocial behaviour in Alsager and the need, in his view,
for an increased Police presence in the town. The question had been
forwarded to the Commissioner's Office.

28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Annual meeting of the Panel held on 11th June 2021 and Confirmation Hearings held on 11th June 2021 and 3rd September 2021 be approved.

29 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair briefed the Panel on Stage 2 of the Home Office review of Police and Crime Commissioners, noting that the consultation exercise had an extremely tight timescale. He informed the Panel that he had made a submission, which he had shared informally with Panel members. One of the issues being consulted over was the desirability of Panels being organised at a regional level. Councillor Findlow commented that he thought this would be extremely ill-advised, although he could see some benefits of expert advice being available at a regional level to assist with such things as the interpretation of statistics.

30 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBER OF THE PANEL

Mr Evan Morris, Panel Chair, noted that he had stepped back from the work of the subgroup which had been established to lead the recruitment process, as one of the candidates had been known to him.

Councillor Rob Bissett, the Panel's Deputy Chair, who had chaired the selection subgroup briefed the Panel on the outcome of the process. Twenty-one expressions of interest had been received by the Secretariat which had led to twelve formal applications being received. Four individuals had been shortlisted by the subgroup, unfortunately one candidate withdrew shortly before the interviews were held. All three candidates who were interviewed had done well. The unanimous view of the subgroup (Councillors Bissett, Delaney and Riley) was that Miss Yasmin Somani should be appointed to the Panel. Brief details on Miss Somani's experience were circulated to Panel members.

The Panel thanked Mr Bob Fousert for the sterling work he had done as a member of the Panel over many years.

RESOLVED

That Miss Yasmin Somani be appointed to the Panel for a three-year term with effect from 1st October 2021.

31 ADOPTION OF A CHARTER FOR THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

The Chair outlined the background to the drafting of the Charter, which had been well received by Panel members and used in the recruitment process for an independent co-opted member of the Panel. Councillor Findlow suggested that the Charter should include an explicit statement relating to the Commissioner's accountability to the Panel.

RESOLVED

That the Chairman, supported by the Secretariat, update the draft Charter to reflect Councillor Findlow's comments and then publish the Charter on the Panel's page of the Cheshire East Council website.

32 10TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR POLICE AND CRIME PANELS - PANEL ATTENDANCE

The Chairman sought the views of the Panel of sending members to the Annual Conference in Warwick or in investing in more targeted training which could be of particular benefit to new Panel members. The consensus view was that the Chairman should attend the Conference with the balance of the training budget being spent on providing more general training for Panel members. Panel members favoured face to face rather than virtual training. The Secretariat were asked to liaise with Frontline Consulting who had offered to provide the training, based on something that they had delivered to other Police and Crime Panels and had been well received by those Panels.

33 COMMISSIONER'S PUBLIC SCRUTINY BOARD - 19TH AUGUST 2021

The Panel reviewed the papers published by the Commissioner in advance of his Scrutiny Board in August.

34 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel's work programme was noted.

Panel members expressed a preference for informal meetings with the Commissioner to be held on a Friday, subject to meetings not clashing with other commitments that Panel members may have. The Secretariat were asked to liaise with Panel members and the Commissioner's Office over the programme of informal meetings.

35 CONSIDERATION OF THE COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting. By way of introduction to the three agenda items to which he would contribute, the Commissioner outlined the work that he had undertaken in his first few

months in office. He noted that he had formally moved the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner from Stockton Heath to Winsford; he had also restructured his Office. The Commissioner thanked the Panel for their backing at Confirmation Hearings for his chosen candidates as Deputy Commissioner and Chief Executive.

The Commissioner noted that the draft annual report related to the last year of his predecessors' term of office.

Cllr Riley queried overall detection rates and also the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on the roads. She noted that Covid had created a range of issues over the year to which the annual report related, making comparisons difficult. She also commented that for a year when the county had been locked down for a considerable time, the number killed on the roads in Cheshire had increased. The Commissioner agreed that overall detection rates were too low, but did note that there was a national issue with definitions over recording, this was being taken up with the Home Office. The Commissioner suggested that it would be helpful for the issue of those killed and seriously injured on the roads to be discussed at an informal meeting with Panel members.

The Panel noted the Commissioner's annual report.

36 CONSIDERATION OF THE COMMISSIONER'S DRAFT POLICE AND CRIME PLAN 2021-24

The Commissioner outlined the process that had been followed to develop the draft Police and Crime Plan, which was being considered by the Panel, noting that the final version would be published on 1st November 2021. Accessible versions would be available for those with disabilities.

The Commissioner noted that he would shortly be writing to every household in Cheshire outlining his plans and seeking views on policing priorities. He would also seek views on a precept for 2022/23.

Members of the Police and Crime Panel questioned the Commissioner on his draft Police and Crime Plan:

Cllr Paul Findlow

Congratulated the Commissioner on producing the plan so quickly, but asked why the Plan did not include clear, measurable objectives. The Commissioner outlined that the Plan was a strategic document and that he would use detailed performance information in the ongoing task of holding the Chief Constable to account.

Cllr Mick Warren

Sought clarification over the Commissioner's priorities for carbon neutrality. The Commissioner indicated that he was driving down the Constabulary's carbon footprint, but that he was content to have 2040 as

the target for carbon neutrality. The Commissioner congratulated Cheshire East Council on the very ambitious targets that it had adopted.

Cllr Lynn Riley

Sought assures that the strategic public sector partners in Cheshire were working together around the prize of fully integrated working. The Commissioner indicated that he supported such an approach and noted that the Constabulary would shortly be appointing a victim's champion.

Asked the Commissioner for clarification over what steps would be taken in the important area of reducing violence against women and girls. The Commissioner agreed that this was an important long term priority. He noted that Safer Streets funding had been used to help make improvements in this area.

Suggested that a more collegiate approach to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) could be a sensible way forward, rather than the creation of one CSP for Cheshire which was the Commissioner's favoured approach.

Mr Evan Morris

Noted that the Commissioning landscape would change if Commissioners were granted the power of wellbeing that was currently being consulted over by the Home Office. The Commissioner agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Chair assisted by the Secretariat make a formal submission to the Commissioner in relation to the draft Police and Crime Plan.

The letter sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner by the Chair of the Panel providing formal feedback on the draft Police and Crime Plan is appended to these minutes as a matter of record.

37 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Members of the Police and Crime Panel questioned the Commissioner on a range of issues, including:

Cllr Lynn Riley

Sought clarification over a comment that the Commissioner had made in his introduction relating to his desire for Cheshire to be the best police force in the country. She asked what being the best force in the country would look like and what benefits that would bring to the public. The Commissioner responding by saying that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) would determine where the force sat in league tables. In relation to the public, he indicated that he would want to see more Police Officers patrolling the streets, something which was seen as important by a great many people.

Highlighted the importance of Community Orders in addressing crime and in the long term in preventing crime. The Commissioner informed the Panel that this approach was still used in Cheshire, but that he would provide further information to Panel members.

Cllr Peter Lloyd Jones

Recognising the increasingly complex world in which the Police operated asked the Commissioner what would be the optimum number Officers he would wish to see in Cheshire. The Commissioner responded by saying that at present the Chief Constable was content to work to the target of 2,345 Police Officers. The Commissioner did recognise that Policing was becoming ever more complex and that if the Chief Constable were at some point in the future to feel he needed additional offices, work would need to be undertaken to see if that were possible.

Asked the Commissioner on the timetable that he would work to in relation to developing proposals for the 2022/23 Police precept. He was concerned that a great many people across Cheshire were suffering the impact of sharply rising prices. The Commissioner confirmed that his letter to households would be sent on 8th November and would be the start of a consultative exercise. Feedback to the consultation exercise would be possible through a number of channels. The Commissioner commented that he too shared concerns about the rising cost of living.

Cllr Paul Findlow

Asked if the Commissioner had made a submission to Part Two of the ongoing Home Office Review, specifically those questions that related to Police and Crime Panels. The Commissioner responded, saying that he had made a submission and would share it with the Panel.

Asked a question on behalf of a fellow Cheshire East Councillor relating to the ongoing Community Governance Review, and whether the allocation of Police Community Support Officers would change if parish boundaries changed as a result of the Review. The Commissioner indicated that this was an ongoing issue, but that where possible Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would have an association with a Parish. No changes had yet been made.

Raised concerns about the growth of out of court disposals at the national level. The Commissioner indicated that in the right circumstances such disposals had a role to play. The Commissioner offered to undertake more research on the issue and report back to Panel members.

Cllr Kenneth Critchley

Emphasised the important role played by PCSOs. The Commissioner agreed that they played a vital role and would always feature in his plans for policing in Cheshire.

Mrs Sally Hardwick

Sought clarification over how long it would take for newly appointed Police Officers to become fully effective. The Commissioner informed the Panel that this would take some time, but that the Chief Constable in addition to recruiting those with little or no prior experience was seeking to attract qualified Officers from other police forces into Cheshire.

Cllr Mick Warren

Sought the Commissioners views on the enforcement of 20 mph zones that had been introduced in many parts of Cheshire East. The Commissioner responded saying that he was supportive of such zones, but noted that if they extended over too large an area, they lost their effectiveness. He indicated that his office was working on a wider initiative in relation to speeding.

Cllr Martyn Delaney

Expressed concerns at delays with 101 calls being answered, asking the Commissioner what steps he was taking to challenge the Chief Constable over such delays. The Commissioner agreed that the system was not operating well that that this was being looked at by the Chief Constable.