

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 7th February, 2020 at Wyvern House, Winsford

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East Council Councillors JP Findlow, M Warren and L Jeuda

Cheshire West & Chester Councillors A Dawson, M Delany and
S Naylor

Halton Councillors A Lowe and G Zygadllo

Warrington Councillor B Maher

Independent Co-optees: Mr E Morris MBE (Chairman), Mrs S Hardwick
and Mr B Fousert

Officers: Mr M Smith and Mr Ibrahim
(Cheshire East, Secretariat)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Laura Jeuda to her first Panel meeting.

44 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Dave Thompson, Norman Plumpton Walsh and Rob Bisset.

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

Councillor Sam Naylor, who was substituting for Councillor Rob Bisset (Cheshire West and Cheshire) indicated that he was a retired Police Officer.

46 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present wishing to use public speaking time.

47 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Matters Arising

Councillor Paul Findlow asked for clarification over when the Complaints Sub Committee would meet. It was confirmed that the Secretariat would, in the near future be canvassing dates for a meeting of the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

48 LOCATION, DATE AND TIMING OF PANEL MEETINGS

The Panel discussed the draft programme of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year and the location of future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel should meet at 10.00am on:

27th March 2020
12th June 2020
18th September 2020
27th November 2020
5th February 2021
16th April 2021

That subject to the accommodation being available, future meeting of the Panel would be held at Wyvern House, Winsford, with the seating arrangements for the Commissioner being reviewed.

49 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S PROPOSED PRECEPT FOR 2020/21

The Chairman welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting; he was accompanied by Wendy Bebbington and Clare Hodgson. The Chairman noted that Panel members had received a comprehensive briefing from the Commissioner and his Finance team in advance of the meeting.

The Commissioner noted that details of the financial settlement had only been received from the Home Office on 22nd January, a month later than normal. He outlined the process of consultation that he had undertaken, over 2,500 responses had been received, with two thirds of those responding supporting his proposals. The Commissioner summarised the details of his proposed precept, details of which had been provided in advance to Panel members and had been published on the Panel's page of the Cheshire East Council website.

The Chairman noted that it would be helpful if the Commissioner had access to research undertaken by the four Cheshire local authorities when setting his proposed precept each year.

Mrs Sally Hardwick asked the Commissioner for more information about the consultation exercise, specifically referring to the third of people who had indicated that they did not support the proposed increase in precept. The Commissioner noted that of the third that had not been in support, half felt that the Police Service should be paid for nationally, the other half had indicated that they could not afford an increase in their Council Tax bill.

The Chairman asked the Commissioner for clarification over the recruitment and retention of Police Officers. The Commissioner indicated that the 43 additional Officers that had been approved when the 2019/20 precept had been approved in February 2019 had now been appointed. He noted that he had asked the Chief Constable to develop a recruitment plan for the forthcoming year.

Councillor Paul Findlow sought clarification over the adequacy of financial reserves. The Commissioner indicated that reserves were lower than they had been in previous years; they had reduced from £20m to £9m. Clare Hodgson, the Commissioner's Chief Finance Officer clarified the position in relation to the reserves and the way in which they would be reported. She confirmed that in her professional opinion the reserves were adequate.

Councillor Andrew Dawson asked the Commissioner if there were any empty, unsold Police Stations in Cheshire. The Commissioner responded by saying that he had worked hard to rationalise the Police estate. Using the former Frodsham Police Station as an example he outlined how space was now shared with the Fire and Rescue Service. He recognised that there was still more to do, but he was confident that there were no redundant assets in the Police estate. The Chairman asked if Commissioner could provide the Panel with a detailed breakdown of the Constabulary's assets, with capital values.

Councillor Sam Naylor, who chaired the Northwich Regeneration Forum referred to the desire to create a public sector hub in Northwich, the development of which was being delayed by failure to relocate Northwich Police Station. The Commissioner indicated that affordability was an issue, whilst he saw it as desirable for the Police to be integrated into public sector hubs, this was not possible if the cost was greater than current expenditure.

Mr Bob Fousert asked what the Commissioner's strategy was in relation to "Green issues" in relation to both property and transport. The Commissioner indicated that this was not an issue directly related to the Police precept, but that he would be happy to provide the Panel with an

update at the future meeting. He recognised that these were important issues that were of concern to both the Panel and wider public.

The Chairman asked for information on the Commissioner's approach to risk management and the use of risk registers. He used the example of the removal of national funding from the Cheshire Anti-Stalking Unit as an example. The Commissioner reassured the Panel that he and the Chief Constable adopted a robust approach to risk management and that a joint strategic risk register was maintained. He indicated that should the Precept be approved, funding would continue to the Anti-Stalking Unit, which also received funding from the NHS. The Chairman congratulated the NHS for their foresight in providing funding for the Unit.

Councillor Andrew Dawson asked the Commissioner to reflect on the four budgets that he had set; noting that the increase each year had always been above inflation. The Commissioner highlighted that the increases had always been within the limits set by national Government and that on most occasions Government funding had not kept up with inflation; this had created very serious pressures on Police funding within Cheshire.

Councillor Paul Findlow noted that the increase in the number of Police Officers should lead to improvements in responses to crime. The Commissioner noted that cuts had consequences, and that with limited resources the Police did have to prioritise work and the way in which they responded to incidents. However, he did feel that his approach to community policing had raised the profile of policing in Cheshire and provided reassurance to the Cheshire community. The Chairman noted that the ever increasing complexity of crime made the role of the Police more difficult.

The Chairman thanked Wendy Bebbington and Clare Hodgson for the work that they had undertaken in developing the paperwork presented to the Panel and for the informal briefing sessions which had been held the previous week.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel support the Commissioner's proposed Precept for 2020/21 without qualification or comment. Councillor Andrew Dawson abstained from voting.

50 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Councillor Mick Warren asked the Commissioner about the use of technology in relation to such things as swearing Warrants in front of a JP, a process that could be very time consuming. The Commissioner responded by expressing his concern that the closure of many Magistrates Courts had created pressures for the Police. He outlined that a pilot process had been taking place in the west of the county where video

conferencing was being trailed for the issuing on non-urgent warrants. This was soon to be extended across Cheshire.

Mr Bob Fousert highlighted the small number of allegations of rape which resulted in prosecutions; he expressed concerns at the approach adopted by the Crown Prosecution Service. The Commissioner outlined the process that that was followed in such cases. By way of example he indicated that in 40 per cent of cases where there was a named suspect, the victim did not wish a case to go any further. A further 30 per cent went no further because there were evidential issues. The Chairman noted that there were parallels to Domestic Violence cases, where victims were frequently unwilling to give evidence against the offender.

Councillor Laura Jeuda, highlighting innovative work being undertaken in relation to Domestic Violence in Cheshire East, asked the Commissioner what capacity he had in his budget to extend work in this area. The Commissioner reaffirmed his commitment to combatting Domestic Violence across Cheshire, noting that Women's Centres would soon be established in Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington, with joint funding from his budget, the Probation Service and local authorities.

The Chairman asked the Commissioner for clarification over whether Cheshire had applied for funding from the recently announced Safe Streets Fund. The Commissioner indicated that Cheshire would be making a bid for funding, following receipt of guidance that Cheshire could qualify under the scheme. However, he did have concerns that at £24m nationally the overall amount of funding available was very low.

Mr Fousert asked what controls were in place in Cheshire in relation to facial recognition software. The Commissioner indicated that he had some concerns over the use of such systems. He had asked the Chief Constable to draft a briefing note on this issue.

On behalf of the Deputy Chair who was not able to be at the meeting, the Chairman asked the Commissioner about the increase in abuse and attacks against NHS staff. He asked what steps the Police were taking to combat this. The Commissioner provided some background information on the range of incidents at hospitals, not all of which involved crimes. He recognised that not all incidents were reported. Discussions were ongoing with the Chief Constable over how best the Police could address these issues, consideration was being given to having a permanent Police presence at hospitals. Such an approach was commended by the Panel.

51 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel's Work programme was noted.

A number of Panel members indicated an interest in attending the Ninth National Conference for Chairs, Members and Support Officers of Police

(Fire) and Crime Panels to be held from Monday 23 to Tuesday 24 November 2020 at Scarman House, Warwick Conference Centre.

52 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel be held on Friday 27th March at 10.00am. The meeting would be held at Wyvern House, The Drumber, Winsford.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.15 pm

Mr E Morris (Chairman)