

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cheshire Police and Crime Panel**
held on Friday, 26th November, 2021 in the 1st Floor Committee Room,
Ellesmere Port Library, Civic Way, CH65 0BG

PRESENT

Councillors:

Cheshire East: Councillors J Paul Findlow and Laura Jeuda

Cheshire West & Chester: Councillor Robert Bisset,

Halton: Councillor John Stockton

Warrington: Councillors Mark Jervis and Jane Whalen

Independent Co-optees: Mrs Sally Hardwick, Mr Evan Morris MBE, and
Miss Yasmin Somani

Officers: Mr Martin Smith, Cheshire East Council

38 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Norman Plumpton Walsh, Cllr Lynn Riley, Cllr Kenneth Critchley, Cllr Martyn Delaney and Cllr Mick Warren.

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

No issues were raised.

40 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS TO THE PANEL'S NEWLY APPOINTED INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBER

The Chair welcomed Miss Yasmin Somani to her first meeting of the Police and Crime Panel.

41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public wished to speak at the meeting, but Mr Will Charlton, a resident of Winsford had submitted three questions which were read on his behalf by the Secretariat. These related to the funding of the National Crime Agency, abuse on social media and the powers of Commissioners to suspend Chief Constables. The Panel subsequently made the Commissioner aware of Mr Charlton's concerns.

42 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th September 2021 be approved.

43 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr Evan Morris noted that as Chair of the Panel he had been interviewed by Deloitte's as part of the Home Secretary's ongoing review of Police and Crime Commissioners and the role of Police and Crime Panels. Discussion had focused on his role as an independent co-opted Panel Chair.

44 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year was noted. The Secretariat indicated that a draft programme of meetings for 2022/23 would be brought to the February 2022 meeting of the Panel.

45 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chair welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting.

The Commissioner congratulated Miss Yasmin Somani on her appointment to the Panel.

The Commissioner outlined a number of developments since the last meeting of the Panel in September; these included:

- The new Chief Executive of his Office had taken up appointment.
- The Police and Crime Plan had been launched.
- A detailed and comprehensive consultation exercise had commenced.
- He had been successful in achieving Government funding in relation to domestic abuse and safer streets.
- His ongoing scrutiny of the Chief Constable.

NB: Following the meeting the Commissioner provided the Panel with a written summary of the above, this is attached to these minutes for reference.

Cllr Paul Findlow

Sought clarification from the Commissioner on the work that his office were undertaking in relation to restorative justice, speeding and out of court disposals; issues which had all been discussed at the Panel's previous meeting and where updates had been promised. The Commissioner indicated that the issues of restorative justice and out of

court disposals would be discussed at his informal meeting with the Panel in January 2022. Work was being undertaken within his Office in relation to speeding, with average speed cameras being considered at sites across the county. Discussions were also taking place on this issue with the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC).

Sought clarification over what steps were being taken within the Constabulary to eradicate “canteen culture” (disrespectful, discriminatory attitudes), something which had received considerable media coverage nationally over recent weeks. The Commissioner confirmed that this was something that he discussed with the Chief Constable on a regular basis. The issue was being approached by the Constabulary in a number of ways, including improved training. Mrs Sally Hardwick also questioned the Commissioner on this issue, noting her experience (not as a Panel member) of dealing with Police complaints.

Asked the Commissioner for information on response rates to 101 calls. The Commissioner noted that when seeking election, he had campaigned for improvements and had addressed this very soon on taking up the position of Police and Crime Commissioner. Additional staff had been appointed and early indications were that response rates were improving; the situation would continue to be monitored. The Commissioner noted that the Control Room was now fully staffed, albeit that they were suffering from higher than normal absence rates as a consequence of Covid.

Cllr John Stockton

Asked the Commissioner to outline his policy for the replacement of Police Stations across Cheshire, highlighting the need for a new police station in Runcorn. The Commissioner noted that many Police Stations were not fit for purpose. In addition, he indicated that he was committed to making the Constabulary carbon neutral by 2040, something that would not be possible without investment in the building stock. He noted that there would always be a Police presence in town centres such as Runcorn, but that some parts of the Constabulary, such as CID, could be located in out-of-town locations. A Cheshire wide strategy was in the process of being developed. He indicated that public consultation had started over the relocation of the police station in Wilmslow and confirmed that he was in dialogue with Halton Borough Council over the needs of Runcorn.

Sought clarification over how issues such as hate crime and domestic violence were managed by the Constabulary. The Commissioner responded by saying that they were managed professionally, but that the Chief Constable was in the process of reviewing such issues.

Asked the Commissioner for information on the Constabulary’s approach to cybercrime and whether he thought it was fit for purpose. The Commissioner agreed that cybercrime was a major issue nationally, but that he was content with the way in which the Police in Cheshire responded to such issues. Councillor Stockton also asked the

Commissioner if his Office had a social media strategy; the Commissioner confirmed that it did.

Cllr Jane Whalan

Asked the Commissioner for clarification of his policy in relation to the allocation of PCSOs, noting that communities appreciated the relationship that they could develop with their PCSO. The Commissioner confirmed that the 122 communities that had been identified by the previous Commissioner would be maintained. He stressed the work that was being undertaken to increase the overall Police establishment across Cheshire.

Cllr Laura Jeuda

Asked the Commissioner about the vetting procedures for those wishing to join the Special Constabulary in any capacity. The Commissioner confirmed that all those wishing to work for the Constabulary or in his Office had to be vetted. Whilst there were pressures in the system, corners were not being cut. The Chair noted general concerns across the country following the tragic case of Sarah Everard in London. The Commissioner confirmed that he had been assured that the vetting process in Cheshire was fit for purpose. There was no complacency and the Constabulary remained ever vigilant. Cllr Mark Jervis followed up this issue, referring to his experience of working in the past with the Civil Nuclear Constabulary. The Commissioner offered to discuss this issue further with the Panel at an informal meeting.

Questioned the longevity of the funding received from Government over issues such as domestic violence and safer streets. The Commissioner indicated that such funding was time limited, but that he hoped that best practice could be learnt from the projects funded by Government grants and new ways of working rolled out across the county with cooperation from the four Cheshire Councils.

Miss Yasmin Somani

Asked what actions were being taken in Cheshire to engage with women and girls and to ensure their safety. The Commissioner indicated that communications were being improved. He was working with the Chief Constable to ensure that Cheshire was a place where criminals, including those engaging in hate crime and crime against women and girls, did not feel safe.

Sought clarification over his strategy for communicating with young people. The Commissioner noted the work of the Youth Commission and stressed that the views of young people were important to him.

Mr Evan Morris

Noted that data contained in the Commissioner's Scrutiny papers showed a significant increase in crime against people with disabilities. The

Commissioner recognised that there had been an increase but noted that it was encouraging that people were coming forward to report such crime. The Chair noted that he would shortly become a Trustee of the Deafness Support Network (DSN), the Commissioner said he would welcome a dialogue with the DSN.

Noting that this was an issue which he had raised before and one that he had discussed with the previous Commissioner, he asked the Commissioner for an update on the issue of the ongoing costs of the failure to implement the Emergency Communications Network in a timely manner. In responding the Commissioner stressed that this was a national problem with a project managed by the Home Office. He said that the issue was complex and that he would be happy to discuss the problems with Panel members at an informal meeting.

Sought clarification over the salary of the recently appointed Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, noting that in the paperwork provided to the Panel in advance of the Confirmation Hearing held on 11th June 2021, the salary for the position was £38,250. He indicated that the salary as stated on the Commissioner's website was now £51,000. The Commissioner indicated that he had given his Deputy a pay rise from 1st November to reflect the level of work he was undertaking and the contribution that he was making. Councillor Findlow asked whether a job evaluation exercise had been undertaken, the Commissioner responded, saying that such an evaluation was not appropriate in such circumstances.

Cllr Rob Bissett

Asked the Commissioner how the comments made by Panel members to his draft Police and Crime Plan had been taken into account in the final published document. The Commissioner committed his Office to responding to this issue in writing.

Asked for assurances that following the murder of Sir David Amess MP, steps had been taken to ensure the safety of all Cheshire MPs. The Commissioner assured the Panel that appropriate steps had been taken, but for obvious reasons these were confidential.

Mrs Sally Hardwick

Noted the excessive amount of time taken for cases of domestic abuse and sexual crime to reach the courts. The Commissioner shared her concerns and indicated that these were issues he had taken up with the Crown Prosecution Service and the judiciary, but he recognised that these were national problems.