



Cheshire Police and Crime Panel

Questions / lines of enquiry to be taken up with the Commissioner at the meeting of the Panel on 22nd December 2022

1. The Manchester Arena Inquiry published their report and presented it to Parliament in November 2022. Whilst the report provides an extensive insight into what went well and what didn't go so well on the night of the terrorist incident, it does say:

"By no means all the mistakes that were made on 22 May 2017 were inevitable. There had been failures to prepare. There had been inadequacies in training. Well-established principles had not been ingrained in practice"

Can the Commissioner give the Panel some re-assurance that if the similar circumstances arose in Cheshire, our emergency services, particularly the Police, will have learned from the mistakes at this tragic event?

2. The recently published Peel review by HMICFRS into Cheshire Constabulary highlights two areas of policing that "Require Improvement". Your Police and Crime Plan highlights that you will monitor areas in the Peel Review that require Improvement. In relation to one of these areas, "Responding to the public", the report states:

"The Constabulary isn't answering all 999 calls within target times. In January 2022, 76% were being answered within ten seconds."

Can the Commissioner tell the Panel what the current situation is with answering 999 calls?

3. Although there has been an improvement, many non-emergency calls to the Police are still abandoned. The abandonment rate ranged from a year high of 37.3% in August 2021 to 16.2% in January 2022. The Panel would contend that these rates are too high.

Commissioner, both you and the Chief Constable have in the past assured the Panel that you want to see this improve, and that some progress had been made. Could you tell the Panel what the current abandonment rate is and what the ongoing plans are in this area?

4. The Peel Review highlights another area for improvement as being managing offenders and suspects. Comments made in the report include:

“The Constabulary should ensure the quality of supervisory Violent and Sex Offenders Register reviews is robust and that actions are recorded and completed to effectively manage the risk posed by Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs)”

“The constabulary should urgently review its intelligence processes for cases awaiting allocation.”

“The Constabulary should continue to review its use of Released Under Investigation to assure itself that opportunities to safeguard children and prevent further offending are not missed”.

Can the Commissioner outline what has been done in these critical areas to improve this situation?

5. Following the tragic Murder of Sara Everard by serving Metropolitan Police Officer, Wayne Couzens, the Panel requested that the Commissioner re-assure members that the same could not happen in Cheshire. To this end the Panel, at an informal meeting, were given a presentation by the Head of Professional Standards on the Cheshire vetting processes.

The recently published national report by HMICFRS into vetting, misconduct and misogyny in the Police has 43 recommendations that will need to be implemented in Cheshire. Can the Commissioner outline how this process will be managed and how he plans to hold the Chief Constable to account in meeting these objectives?

Panel Members may be interested in a previous occurrence in Cheshire highlighted on page 38 of the above report:

In 2018, a Cheshire Constabulary Officer was [described in court](#) as someone who had joined the police service “to gain the keys to a sweetshop” through access to potential victims. He met a 13-year-old girl at her home after answering a call to a domestic incident. He later contacted her on social media and started sending sexual messages and photos, returning to her home three days after the incident. While her mother was out, he drove the child to a secluded country lane and raped her, filming the offence on his mobile phone. At Liverpool Crown Court, he was convicted of a series of sex offences. This included rape, four charges of attempting to arrange the commission of a child sex offence, and one charge of arranging a child sex offence. These related to 5 different victims, aged between 12 and 15.

This officer had passed the vetting process in October 2016. Before his appointment as a police officer, the force received information that a complaint of rape had been made against him in early 2017 in another force area. Cheshire Constabulary put his recruitment on hold until the sexual offence allegation had been fully investigated. When no further action was taken against

him, they resumed his recruitment application but didn't re-vet him. If they had, they would have been made aware of two further complaints about him: one of sexual activity with a child and one of persistently asking a young girl out on social media. These were being investigated by neighbouring forces that didn't know that he had applied to join the police.

Further vetting checks would have revealed this.

In April 2017, the officer eventually joined Cheshire Constabulary. It was while on duty in October 2017 that he met his victim. He was jailed for 25 years.

6. With reference to the Peel report, the Panel were pleased that the Constabulary were graded as Good in the "Building, supporting and protecting the workforce category", with good leadership being provided by the senior team and a culture of learning, not blame being found. However, the report does find that more could be done to improve support to contact centre staff, a key group of people. Is this an area where the Commissioner is challenging and scrutinising the Chief Constable? Can he tell the Panel what is being done to ensure that contact centre staff are better supported?