

CHESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 5 FEBRUARY 2016

Present:	
Cheshire East	Councillors G Hayes and H Murray
Cheshire West and Chester	Councillors A Black, R Bisset and Dawson
Halton	Councillor D Thompson
Warrington	Councillor P Walker
Independent Members	Mr R Fousert, Mr E Hodgson and Mrs S Hardwick
Officers	T Date (Solicitor to the Council – Warrington BC) J Joinson (Principal Democratic Services Officer – Warrington BC) and A Kellock (Democratic Services Officer – Warrington BC)
Also in Attendance	John Dwyer (Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner) and Stephen Pickup (Head of Planning and Scrutiny, Office of the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner)

CPCP37 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors P Findlow, D Marren (G Hayes Sub), B Maher and D Lea.

CPCP38 Code of Conduct – Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

CPCP39 Public Participation

Neil Lewis, the Liberal Democrat candidate for the Police and Crime Commissioner addressed the panel and asked them for their views on how they would like to engage with any new Police and Crime Commissioner following the election in May 2016. The panel replied and explained that they valued openness and transparency as saw it as vital in order to make the scrutiny process as effective as possible. It was also stated that the panel liked to look at operational matters in order to get a better understanding of wider policing issues.

The Chairman reminded those watching via the webcast that questions to the Panel or the Police and Crime Commissioner could be submitted via twitter through @CheshirePCP.

CPCP40 Minutes

Members of the panel noted that questions relating to the effects of out of

court disposals on reoffending rates and the number of officers trained in restorative justice had been raised at the last meeting but a response had not yet been received. The panel agreed to raise the questions with the Commissioner.

Decision:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

CPCP41 Blue Light Innovation Conference Feedback

The panel received a report from Independent Member Mr Eric Hodgson providing feedback from the Blue Light Innovation Conference that was attended in November 2015.

The feedback provided outlined the purpose of the conference which sought to promote efficiency, effectiveness and best practice across all of the emergency services focusing on the need for efficiency savings. Examples of such savings were given from the NHS and Fire and Rescue Services.

Innovative thinking was a key theme of the conference as was the potential of blurring the distinctions between the emergency services. An example of Greater Manchester Police responding to cardiac arrest calls was provided. The panel would ask the Commissioner about what opportunities he had identified for synergy of front line services between the emergency services within Cheshire.

Decisions:

That the panel notes the feedback from the Blue Light Innovation Conference provided and thanks Mr Hodgson for attending the conference;

That the panel approves the procedure for panel members attending conferences, workshops and training events as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

CPCP42 Home Office – Public Consultation on Proposals for Police and Crime Commissioners Complaints

A report providing information on a Home Office consultation with regards to proposals to reform the arrangements for dealing with complaints against the Police and Crime Commissioner was presented to the panel. The panel was requested to consider the proposed draft response to the consultation that was circulated and confirm a formal response by 10 March 2016.

The report was presented by the Solicitor to the Council who explained that the complaints procedure was a statutory process set by the Home Office but that most complaints received did not fall within the terms of reference of the procedure and the remit of the panel.

The panel suggested that the proposed changes needed clarification of what was within the remit of the procedures and to set out an appropriate set of clear triggers for escalating complaints to the next stages.

The costs associated with dealing complaints were outlined within the report and the panel agreed that changes to the complaints procedure were required to ensure that money and officer time was not wasted dealing with spurious and vexatious complaints.

It was also suggested that there needed to be clear public awareness of the distinction between an operational policing issue and a complaint about the Commissioner specifically. A simple pro forma could be developed to confirm what was within the remit of the complaints procedure and also to provide advice on where to redirect complaints if they related to operational issues rather than the Commissioner.

Panel members raised the issue of the remit of Police and Crime Panel's to look at complaints and the conduct of Commissioners prior to them taking office. It was confirmed that this was not currently within the procedure. An amendment to the draft response to the consultation was proposed as follows:

"Noting the experience of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel when dealing with its former Commissioner, it may make sense that the rules are clear as to whether past conduct, unrelated to the role of the Commissioner are included within the remit of the panel"

The panel agreed that the public needed clear information about what the panel and the Commissioner were able to deal with and that such guidance, including information about where to direct policing complaints should be published on the website.

Decisions:

That the draft response to the consultation be updated with the above amendments included and be circulated to panel members before being signed off by the Chair and Deputy;

That guidance notes on complaints for members of the public be drafted and published on the Police and Crime Panel webpage.

CPCP43 Cheshire Police – Protecting the Vulnerable

A report highlighting the rating of Cheshire Constabulary as 'Good' at protecting the vulnerable in the most recent HMIC review was presented to the panel. The panel noted that the rating of 'Good' was the highest received by any police force in England as Wales as none had received the rating of 'Outstanding'

Panel members noted the report and commended Cheshire Constabulary for their work in protecting the most vulnerable in society for being recognized for

this work with a rating of 'Good'.

Decision:

That the panel commends the Commissioner, Chief Constable and the whole of Cheshire Constabulary for achieving the rating of 'Good' at protecting the vulnerable.

CPCP44 Scrutiny Items

The notes of the Management Board meeting of 12 November, 9 December, 18 December 2015, 6 January 2016 and the notes of the Scrutiny Board held on 16 December 2015 were received by the panel.

Panel members noted the high charge and conviction rates for domestic abuse within Cheshire and praised the Constabulary for this. The panel also noted that the Commissioner would be hosting a rural crime conference on 29 February in Tarporley and Mr Fousert agreed to attend on behalf of the panel.

CPCP45 Police and Crime Panel Meeting Dates – 2016/17

The panel received and noted the draft meeting dates for the 2016/17 municipal year.

Decision:

That the draft meeting dates for the 2016/17 municipal year be agreed by the panel.

CPCP 46 Webcasting Meetings

A report outlining the viewing figures and cost for webcasting panel meetings during the 2015/16 municipal year was presented and discussed. The panel noted the high viewing figures for panel meetings and expressed their support for the continued use of the facility as a way of encouraging greater public participation and awareness of panel meetings.

The costs associated with the webcasting function were discussed and it was agreed that the panel secretariat would contact colleagues at Cheshire West and Chester as the host authority for panel meetings to negotiate the cost for future years.

Decisions:

That the panel supports the continued use of the webcasting function for the 2016/17 municipal year;

That the panel secretariat contact Cheshire West and Chester as the meetings host authority to negotiate the cost of the function.

The Police and Crime Commissioner was in attendance at the meeting from this point.

CPCP47 Budget and Precept 2016/17

The Commissioner presented his report on the 2016/17 budget and precept to the panel and was available to answer questions from the panel along with his senior officer team. It was noted that the panel had previously received an informal briefing on the budget with the Commissioner, Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and senior officers.

The Commissioner was required to set an annual budget and to present it to the panel. A medium term financial plan for the period from 2016-2021 was also presented and the panel noted that HMIC had stated that Cheshire Constabulary was well placed to deal with the financial challenges going forward in its review during 2015.

The panel noted that Police funding had been protected at current levels throughout the Comprehensive Spending Review Period up to 2020 as announced by the Chancellor in the 2015 Autumn Statement. The protected funding levels were based on the assumption that precept levels would be raised by 2% per annum up to 2020.

Cheshire was within the lowest 10% of Police forces in England and Wales for their precept level and as such the Home Office had confirmed that they would be allowed to raise their precept level by up to 3.2%, equating to £5 per Band D property for 2016/17 without the need for a referendum. The Commissioner was confident that such a rise in the precept for 2016/17 would set the make the Constabulary well placed to deal with the expected pressures and uncertainties going forward.

The funding formula for 2016/17 would remain the same as in previous years due to the proposed new formula being postponed. A new funding formula was expected to take effect from the 2017/18 municipal year and it was as yet unknown how this would impact on the amount of funding available to the Constabulary. The Commissioner would remain engaged with the consultation process regarding any proposed changes to the formula and would keep the panel informed.

The Constabulary would continue to work with the other emergency services across Cheshire in order to find innovative ways of saving money whilst also maintaining high quality of service. The panel noted the work being carried out to join up back office functions with the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Summing up, the Commissioner informed the panel that the budget and precept for 2016/17 would provide a stable financial picture for the Constabulary going forward and would enable them to maintain Cheshire as one of the safest places in the country.

The panel was invited to ask questions with regards to the budget and

proposed precept for 2016/17.

Councillor Walker highlighted paragraph 32 of the budget report and noted the reduction in the number of PCSO's from 220 to 211 within Warrington. The Commissioner responded and informed the panel that the reduction of nine PCSO's was as a result of a few partners who had previously part funded PCSO's informing the Constabulary that they intended to withdraw their part funding. No further communication had been received from others partners regarding withdrawal of part funding so it was expected that the stated PCSO numbers of 211 would remain as most partner organisations would have set their budgets for 2016/17.

Councillor Dawson requested details of the partner organisations who part funded PCSO's to ensure that Council Tax payers were not paying multiple times for their PCSO's and to ensure that PCSO's were patrolling the correct areas based on their partner funding. The Commissioner was not prepared to share such information for confidentiality reasons. Councillor Dawson advised the Commissioner that he would be submitting a Freedom of Information request in order to obtain the information.

Councillor Murray expressed concerns that information on the Cheshire Police website suggested that some PCSO's, part funded by partner agencies were being deployed to areas not covered by the partner agencies. The Commissioner advised the panel that if they came across such information and potential discrepancies to inform the Commissioner so he could discuss it with the Chief Constable directly on behalf of the panel and residents.

Councillor Murray raised a further issue with regards to official statistics which highlighted an increase in violent crime how the 2016/17 sought to deal with this. The Commissioner informed the panel that he was in regular contact with the Chief Constable regarding this issue and that the increase in violent crime was part of a national trend but that the increase within Cheshire was lower than the national average. The Commissioner reassured the panel that the 2016/17 budget had allocated resources to deal with such incidents and he was satisfied that the Chief Constable was doing all he could to address the issue.

Mr Fousert brought up the issue of the large increase in the number of sexual assaults and asked if this increase was down to many historical cases being brought forwarded and increased reporting of such incidents. The Commissioner informed the panel that such figures were complex and required clear context in order to understand properly. The panel was reassured that the public had more confidence in the Police to deal with such incidents.

Mr Hodgson asked the Commissioner what effect out of court disposals had had on reoffending rates. It was confirmed that nationally, such initiatives had achieved a 40% reduction in reoffending rates but there were no specific figures for Cheshire.

Councillor Murray informed the Commissioner that a 3.2% rise in the precept could be seen as a significant rise in the context of expected Council tax increases from Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue Service and Town and Parish Councils. The Commissioner informed the panel that the increase would enable the Constabulary recruit an additional 70 officers and that it represented good value for money.

Councillor Dawson asked the Commissioner what plans were in place to rationalize the Constabularies estates whilst working in partnership with other emergency services as it was noted that in many areas Police and Fire Stations existed within close proximity to each other. The Commissioner responded by informing the panel that they were working closely with the Fire and Rescue Service due to both organisations covering the same footprint and that it was important to rationalize both organisations estates to get the best value for money for Council tax payers. Police contact points and hubs were now in place within Fire Stations in areas without Police Stations. The Commissioner also informed the panel that the back office function for the Fire and Rescue Service was expected to move into the Police HQ by 2018.

Councillor Dawson raised a further point with regards to the debt level and the target for 50% of debt to be recovered within 1 month. Concern was expressed that this target seemed to be too low. In response, it was confirmed that this was a financial target and that the actual level of collection within 1 month was 65%

Following questions to the Commissioner, the options available to the panel with regards to the proposed budget and precept for 2016/17 were outlined as follows:

- Support the precept without qualification or comment;
- Support the precept and make recommendations; or
- Veto the proposed precept (by the required majority of at least two thirds of the persons who are members of the panel at the time when the decision is made).

Decision:

That the panel supports the precept without qualification or comments.

Councillor Dawson wished for it to be recorded that he abstained from the vote.

The Commissioner thanked the panel for supporting the precept.

CPCP48 Overview and Scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner

The Chair invited questions from the panel for the Commissioner on general issues not covered during the previous item.

Mr Hodgson asked the Commissioner for his views on bringing the duties of the Fire and Rescue Service under the remit of Police and Crime Commissioners as had been suggested by the Home Office. The Commissioner advised that the Police and Fire and Rescue Service were working closely to bring their back office functions together and that this was at the vanguard of a national initiative. The Commissioner did not feel that further combinations of the roles would be required in Cheshire due to the strong performances and service delivery of both organisations. It was also not seen as desirable for one Chief Officer to be developed to cover both roles as the expertise and experience of the Chief Constable and the Chief Fire Officer were seen as invaluable.

Mr Fousert asked the Commissioner what his views were on the use of *Dash Board Cameras* as a way of increasing road safety and this was a major priority for members of the public. The Commissioner agreed that such cameras could be useful that he regularly liaises with Town and Parish Councils with regards to road safety which included developing initiatives whereby volunteers with speed radar guns were deployed to areas of persistent speeding to act as a deterrent. The Commissioner also informed the panel that new cameras being purchased by the Constabulary could be used by unwarranted officers such as PCSO's with fixed penalty notices for any recorded offences being generated centrally. It was also accepted that as speeds limits were only generally enforceable with an officer present that engineering solutions to high risk areas were preferable and this required further liaison with Local Authorities and the Highways Agency.

Councillor Walker asked whether the call centre operations for the Police and Fire and Rescue Service would be joined up. In response, the Commissioner advised the panel that this was a complicated issues and that discussions were ongoing between the two organisations.

Councillor Dawson raised concerns about a recent incident on the M56 which caused a knock-on incident within Frodsham. The Commissioner advised Councillor Dawson that a debriefing session covering the incidents would take place on Friday 12 February and that feedback from the session would be circulated.

Councillor Thompson queried what liaison the Constabulary had with registered social landlords as he stated an experience with such an organisations informing a Tennent to contact the police to report damage to their property which may well have been a routine maintenance issue. The Commissioner agreed to confirm the extent of the Constabularies liaison with registered social landlords and circulate it to the panel.

Mr Fousert asked if the six month review of the Local Policing Initiative had been carried out and if so could the findings be circulated to the panel. The Commissioner informed the panel that the review was in the process of being carried out and would be circulated to the panel once it had been seen by the Commissioner.

Councillor Walker discussed the Crime Survey of England and Wales and asked if the figures could be circulated. The Commissioner agreed to circulate the figures. A further query was raised which highlighted the historical gap in terms of crime figures between the national survey and the figures released by the Police. It was confirmed that the previously large gap had decreased and the figures were more closely matched.

CPCP49 Work Programme

The panel received and noted the Work Programme for the remainder of 2015/16.