

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 21 October 2016, in Diamond Room, Aylesbury Vale District Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.00 pm.

Members Present

Councillor Julia Adey (Wycombe District Council), Councillor Patricia Birchley (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Margaret Burke (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor Trevor Egleton (South Bucks District Council), Julia Girling (Independent Member), Councillor Angela Macpherson (Aylesbury Vale District Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Curtis-James Marshall (Independent Member), Councillor Chris McCarthy, Councillor Tony Page (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Paul Sohal (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Quentin Webb (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Ian White (South Oxfordshire District Council)

Officers Present

Clare Gray

Others Present

Francis Habgood (Thames Valley Police), Paul Hammond (Office of the PCC), Shona Morrison (Office of the PCC), Anthony Stansfeld (PCC) and Ian Thompson (Office of the PCC)

Apologies

Councillor Derek Sharp (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Tony Ilott (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Robert Courts (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Chiltern District Council), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council) and Councillor Dee Sinclair (Oxford City Council)

Congratulations were given to Cllr Robert Courts who had been elected as the new MP for Witney.

67. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

68. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:-

Page 5- second bullet point before resolved 'Ms Girling referred to a 2014 article which related to the Crown Prosecution Service being criticised for continuing a case particularly on cost considerations. 'If a case satisfies the evidential test and it's in the public interest to prosecute it, the CPS will prosecute'.

69. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

70. Themed Item - Collaboration

The reason for this item was to review the PCC's approach to collaboration with the public and private sector and to receive assurances from him on the discharge of his statutory duties in relation to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR).

PCC's have a legal duty to collaborate where it is in the interests of efficiency or effectiveness of their own or another police force. Collaboration agreements between police forces can also include other public sector organisations as well as the private sector. PCCs will also need to collaborate to meet their responsibilities under the SPR (this sets out a broad range of national threats and the need for a suitable response).

The PCC made the following points in his opening presentation:-

- The Government (Home Office) expected that collaboration would help Forces meet the twin pressures of financial constraint and the ability to meet new policing demands. However, this pressure to collaborate has caused some concern because of having a number of different agreements with different organisations and employees being on different terms and conditions.
- Thames Valley is more advanced than other Forces in terms of their collaborative work. They manage the SE Regional Units for Organised Crime and Counter - Terrorism which are very effective, and collaborate with Hampshire Constabulary on areas such as information and communication technology, joint information management unit and operations (e.g. firearms, police dog section and roads policing). Hampshire however is not part of the Chiltern Transport Consortium which is a collaboration between TVP, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Bedfordshire Police and the Civil Nuclear Constabulary.
- There is a national Specialist Capabilities Programme which will develop options for new models to support policing at a local level so that areas such as underwater search services etc. will be provided for a number of Forces rather than individual Force's having their own service. One proposal is for one Force to be responsible for providing a service for a number of Forces and who will be held to account for its provision.
- The National Police Air Service is a national collaborative venture involving all police forces across England and Wales and is very effective.
- In terms of Fire and Rescue Services the Government through the Policing and Crime Bill are expecting police forces to rationalise support services by collaborating with fire and rescue services. This Bill is still going through Parliament and PCCs are encouraged to produce a business case to submit to the Home Office on their proposals which could include the PCC taking over governance from their local Fire and Rescue Authorities and becoming the employer of fire and rescue staff (the governance model), the Chief Constable becoming a single employer for police and fire staff (single employer model) or the PCC being represented on Fire and Rescue Authorities (the representation model). The PCC was waiting until the legislation was in place before identifying which direction he should take. There were three Fire and Rescue Services in the Thames Valley and some form of collaboration would save money.

Skills in one area could also be used in another – for example you could have a tri service officer working with the police, fire and ambulance services.

Fire and Rescue Services

The Chairman commented that the Fire Service had been changing for some time with a number of firemen being trained as First Responders and was becoming more of a rescue service now that the number of fires were decreasing with increasing health and safety requirements. He referred to the recent National Police and Crime Panel Conference he had attended where Lincolnshire had given a presentation on blue light collaboration. They had been given a Government grant to rationalise services and put all blue light services in one building even though they retained their own sovereignty.

<http://thelincolnite.co.uk/2016/06/blue-light-campus-proposed-for-lincoln-in-15m-emergency-services-shake-up/>

Cllr Burke asked what implications this would have on funding. The PCC reported that the Government has primary responsibility for funding the fire sector but that funding has fallen significantly and to mitigate the impact of the cuts fire and rescue authorities have sought to raise more funds through council tax and alternative business structures. For the police the main source of income is the Home Office Police Grant. The PCC can also raise additional revenue funding through council tax precepts (two thirds Government funding, one third Council tax in the Thames Valley) and there are also a number of grants that are ring fenced for national policing priorities. However, the Government is now looking again at new funding models for Forces in England and Wales. Funding arrangements would depend on whether or which new model is proposed for collaboration.

Regional Units

The PCC reported that the SE Regional Organised Crime Unit was hosted by the Thames Valley Police and brings together the current regional organised crime units under one structure. It was operationally aligned with the SE Counter Terrorism Unit.

Cllr Macpherson asked how efficient and effective were the current collaboration arrangements for these Units and also how organisations were collaborating on the PREVENT agenda ?

The PCC reported that governance of collaboration between Forces across the South East region was undertaken at the Regional Governance Board which has four meetings in 2015/16 where a performance summary is provided. In terms of Serious Organised Crime the PCC expressed concern that a number of the perpetrators were foreign nationals. Cllr Burke asked for figures on this and the types of crimes they were committing. The PCC reported that they were mostly European and that a number of serious criminals had been imported into England. He commented that free movement was an issue where crime was concerned. The information requested was restricted but the PCC would see what information could be put into the public domain.

The Chief Constable reported TVP have a specialist operations unit which includes the SE Serious Organised Crime unit (SEROUCU) and the Technical Support Unit which provides support, equipment and deployments against all types of criminality, and consultancy to the Force for major technical purchases and projects. There is a joint Assistant Chief Constable who exercises overall command of the regional serious organised crime and counter terrorism functions. The ACC attends the Regional Governance Board and represents SEROUCU at a national level with the National Crime Agency and other key stakeholders. The Regional Units will look at cross border threats including London and the Home Counties. Resources are directed to key threats.

The Counter Terrorist Unit receives national funding and again resources are directed to key threats, particularly looking at threats from areas such as High Wycombe and Slough. Local Authorities have a

statutory responsibility with regard to the Prevent agenda. The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Local authorities should establish or make use of an existing local multi-agency group to agree risk and co-ordinate Prevent activity. The police play an essential role in most aspects of Prevent work alongside other agencies and partners. They hold information which can help assess the risk of radicalisation and disrupt people engaged in drawing others into terrorism. A key objective for the police is to ensure that Prevent is embedded into all aspects of policing including patrol, neighbourhood and safeguarding functions.

Performance

Cllr Macpherson asked how outcomes were assessed? The Chief Constable reported that the performance framework was a 'Restricted' document and could not therefore be circulated, as it included information on recent cases including significant seizures of cash and drugs and cyber crime investigations. He would produce information for the Panel which can be shown in the public domain on what outcomes had been achieved.

Action: Chief Constable

The PCC referred to Operation Hornet which related to a current trial involving HBOS banking staff. This was a Thames Valley Police operation and the case was being heard in Southwark Crown court. The Chief Constable reported that this operation had been a significant burden on police resources and commented whether this should be picked up nationally.

<https://www.rt.com/uk/359070-banking-scam-trial-fraud/>

The Chairman, Cllr Egleton referred to the OPCC paper on collaboration (page 16 of the agenda) which referred to joint work with Hampshire and programme delays in a number of areas. The PCC reported that this was largely delays in the ICT Strategy. There were a number of different systems (NICHE) which made the project more complicated and they were obtaining advice from some ICT experts. The Chief Constable reported that there was an issue with infrastructure which needed to be updated so that it was fit for purpose and had good data storage. The PCC referred to body worn cameras and informed Members that several years of information downloaded from these cameras needed to be stored, which required a more powerful system.

Cllr Egleton asked if the rest of the Country was as advanced in collaboration as the Thames Valley? The PCC reported that they were quite advanced in this area. He was working with SE Police Forces on ICT and commented that it was important for areas with similar operational requirements to collaborate where possible.

Cllr Birchley referred to the SE Regional Organised Crime Unit and asked whether crime levels were falling – she referred specifically to a problem in her area relating to the theft of Christmas trees. The PCC reported that crime was increasing particularly with cyber crime and the use of the internet and the number of new crimes such as sexting and pornography. The Chief Constable reported that one of the benefits of collaboration was tackling criminals who do not recognise borders and can travel across a number of areas. There were analysts working on cross border activities with the Met, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire which had produced successful results. They were keeping a close eye on emerging trends such as child sexual exploitation, drugs and fraud crime. Traditional crimes were decreasing. The Chairman referred to an excellent presentation at his Community Safety Partnership meeting on Serious Organised Crime and cross border working.

Cllr Sohal also referred to cross border working and asked a further question about collaboration with the Met and also with the Mayor of London. The PCC reported that he had not had meetings with the

Mayor but with the Deputy Mayor who was responsible for policing. As referred to above they had an analyst undertaking cross border work and individuals were targeted across borders.

Cllr White asked about collaboration with organisations in the Midlands. The PCC reported that there was liaison with a number of regions undertaken by himself and the Chief Constable. Local Area Commanders undertook cross border work with neighbouring forces.

Governance and Accountability

The Vice-Chairman, Cllr Mallon commented that a lot of regional collaboration work had been undertaken before with the old Police Authority. He asked if there were any issues with governance and accountability such as duplication? The PCC reported that with 42 Police Forces there would always be a degree of parochialism and some Forces would not want to collaborate even if was logical to do so. Forces in the South East tended to be larger but some smaller Forces could be subsumed by collaboration. The Vice-Chairman then asked if there were any further opportunities for collaboration. The PCC reported that he would need to look at the Fire and Rescue Services as a result of the Policing and Crime Bill. He also referred to the Specialist Capabilities Programme which was looking at rationalising policing in respect of specialist functions and capabilities. In Autumn 2016, the Programme will present its initial findings and options to the Association Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) General Meeting and the Chief Constables Council. Chiefs and PCCs will be provided with an overriding concept for the future, with initial evidence-based options for the future delivery of a range of specialist capabilities including surveillance, major investigations, armed policing and roads policing.

Partnership Working

Cllr Macpherson asked about collaboration with mental health services and what plans there were to strengthen this area? The Chief Constable referred to the Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat, which is a national agreement between services and agencies involved in the care and support of people in crisis. It sets out how organisations will work together better to make sure that people get the help they need when they are having a mental health crisis. A good example of how this was working was the street triage system which is a service where clinical mental health professionals accompany or assist police at mental health related incidents. The aim is to improve the overall experience and access to appropriate care pathways for persons with mental ill health who present to the police in a “crisis” state. This has reduced demand significantly. The Chief Constable commented that the next steps would be to discuss this with Health and Wellbeing Boards. Cllr Macpherson commented that it would be good for the police to attend when this is being discussed. The Chief Constable reported that the police were not invited to attend Health and Wellbeing Boards. The PCC commented that he would like more engagement with Health and Wellbeing Boards – he had written to them recently and only two Chairmen had responded.

Cllr Mallon then put the following recommendation (seconded by Cllr White) which was agreed.

RECOMMENDED

To liaise with the Hampshire Police and Crime Panel Chairman to look at scrutinising the decisions and actions of the two respective PCCs in respect of collaboration between both Force areas and to identify areas of mutual interest that could benefit from cross panel working.

71. Topical Issues

Commissioning

Shona Morrison Policy Development Manager OPCC presented a report on the proposed victims's services re-design. From 1 April 2015 the OPCC commissioned a range of services to assist victims to cope and recover from the consequences of crime. Based on learning from the first round of commissioning the PCC is intending to undertake a fundamental re-design of commissioned Victims' Services by 1 April 2018 which would include:-

- A central co-located 'Victims First' Hub with the Thames Valley Police Witness Care Unit.
- A number of actual or virtual satellite hubs
- A range of community 'touchpoints' or safe places where members of the public and other professionals can access information, obtain advice or initiate a referral to the Victims Hub.

The overall aim of this proposal was to provide a better service to victims of crime through co-ordination of witness care with enhanced, wraparound, emotional, practical and psychotherapeutic support for all victims. The outcome for victims of crime would be a better and more personalised service, with a single point of contact and co-ordinated care from point of report, throughout criminal justice proceedings, and beyond. Ms Girling, Independent Member commented that the new streamlined system looked better but asked why they were changing it. The PCC reported that it was a more efficient and rigorous system and it was an improvement in terms of directing where the funding was being allocated. The Policy Development Manager reported that the new system was more 'front loaded' to ensure that resources were prioritised to those victims who most needed them. Ms Girling then asked for progress on 'Track my crime' which provided information to victims and was informed that this would be going live shortly. Members welcomed the report.

Police helmets

Thames Valley Police replaced custodian helmets with peaked caps about five years ago but the PCC reported that he and the Chief Constable were now considering whether they should be brought back at the PCC felt they presented a smarter image, would improve public confidence in policing and provided head protection. Curtis James Marshall, Independent Member commented that as a special constable he welcomed this step as it helped in visibility and they would be good to wear 'on the beat' or within busy town centres. The MET used flat caps and helmets. Cllr Mallon thought this was a good idea for identification purposes. Cllr Birchley also thought it was a good idea as it would make police officers more imposing. Cllr Page commented that he could see the merits in the proposal but asked for more information including the views of the Police Federation.

Cllr Macpherson asked about police views on helmets. The Chief Constable reported that it depended on age. An extensive consultation had been conducted previously in Aylesbury as a pilot area where they had changed uniforms and some officers preferred the traditional helmet. Others found it uncomfortable. He would have a look at comments made on the previous consultation and the cost impact of re-introducing helmets particularly in a time of austerity.

Action: Chief Constable

Community Safety Fund allocation

Cllr Page asked when a decision would be made on the allocation. Ian Thompson reported that following the consultation above the majority of responses had suggested keeping the status quo or status quo with top slice. The PCC had now agreed in principle to keep the status quo with a top slice and they would be informing Local Authorities of their allocations in time for budget preparation. The PCC reported that whilst Council budgets were also under pressure this funding had to be used to provide good outcomes rather than supporting underfunded local authority service budgets.

Press articles

Cllr Birchley referred to a press article relating to the amount of sick leave for police officers rising and she asked how this impacted on the Thames Valley. The Chief Constable reported that the Thames Valley had low figures and stress related illnesses could often be related to issues at home rather than work. They had launched a 'Wellbeing Strategy' and also MIND champions to help officers who were feeling stressed and a referral could be made for further help if appropriate. Police officers are referred to the Head of Occupational Therapy if they were off for more than 28 days.

Police Houses

Cllr Burke asked whether empty police houses could be used to help people who were homeless. The Chief Constable reported that the Force had an Estates Strategy and that because of budget pressures it was important for them to get the best value for their estate so they had to go to the open market.

Modern Slavery

Cllr Sinclair asked for an update on modern slavery. The PCC reported that there had been one or two convictions for modern slavery. Cllr Sinclair asked whether there were any language problems in relation to this area. The Chief Constable reported that every police officer had access to an interpreter through a telephone system. New recruits with language skills were encouraged to apply to TVP as this helped break down barriers with minority communities.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/traveller-family-caught-camera-forcing-8361845>

Asylum Seekers

Cllr Burke asked how many areas had taken unaccompanied asylum seekers. Milton Keynes Council was deemed adequate and had taken in 40 people. The PCC reported that this was not his responsibility although he would support this area where he could.

OPCC Office Structure

Cllr Egleton asked what plans the PCC had for his Office. The PCC reported that they had now found a candidate for Deputy PCC which was Matt Barber, who was currently Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council. This would be subject to a confirmation hearing by the Police and Crime Panel. He was still keen to appoint 'Associate PCCs' and to have regional offices but was looking at the best way to achieve this. He had looked at other areas where Associate PCC had been appointed – West Midlands PCC had gone out to tender for their appointment and had received criticism for appointing them. The Chief Executive OPCC reported that West Midlands had appointed an Associate as a contractual service provider so that they could make a political appointment rather than a staff appointment. He commented that it was important to abide by the legislation. Cllr Egleton reported that other areas had appointed Associates and that it was important to have the new structure in place as soon as possible.

72. Recommendation Monitoring

This report has been made available to monitor the PCC and Panel Member responses on previous recommendations made by the Panel, particularly on themed items and to see whether any further action is required.

Cllr Sinclair referred to taxi licensing and expressed concern that there were 300 hackney carriages in Oxford City that were not licensed and therefore could be used for child sexual exploitation, human trafficking and selling drugs. The PCC reported that he would like to see changes in Government policy for taxi licensing as this was an issue across the Country. There was a legal loophole in the legislation.

Cllr Egleton commented that previous recommendations had referred to a dedicated taxi licensing officer for TVP and a national/regional database. He also expressed concern about the use of tinted windows in taxis which could hide children who were being exploited. There were some simple prevention methods available. Cllr Burke reported that unlicensed taxi drivers were coming into Milton Keynes from Northamptonshire and Luton.

Panel Members were asked to contact the Scrutiny Officer if they had comments on the responses provided.

73. Proposals for Future Operation of the Police and Crime Panel

Panel Members received a report on the future operation of the Panel. This was following a Learning and Development Session held in August to look at how the Panel was operating. Cllr Adey and the Scrutiny Officer had also observed a pro-active scrutiny session held by Hampshire Police and Crime Panel to see whether this was a model Thames Valley would like to use.

RECOMMENDED

That Panel Members send comments on the report to the Scrutiny Officer.

74. Work Programme

The Work Programme was noted. The item on mental health for the next meeting would be part of the topical issues report rather than a themed item in order to make sure there was time to discuss the draft Police and Crime Plan.

RECOMMENDED

That Members submit any items that they would like to be considered by the Panel in 2017 to the Scrutiny Officer.

75. Date and Time of Next Meeting

16 December 2016 at 11am at Aylesbury Vale District Council

CHAIRMAN