

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 16 November 2018, in Olympic Room Aylesbury Vale District Council Gatehouse Road Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 12.45 pm.

Members Present

Councillor Trevor Egleton (Chairman - South Bucks District Council), Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Julia Girling (Independent Member), Councillor Norman MacRae (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Councillor Pavitar Mann (Slough Borough Council), Curtis-James Marshall (Independent Member), Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council) and Councillor Mark Winn (Aylesbury Vale District Council).

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner), Francis Habgood (Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police), Paul Hammond (Chief Executive, Office of PCC), Ian Thompson (Chief Finance Officer, Office of PCC) and Anthony Stansfeld (Police and Crime Commissioner).

Apologies

Councillor Eric Batts (Vale of White Horse), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Chiltern District Council), Councillor Tom Hayes (Oxford City Council), Councillor Sophia James (Reading Borough Council) and Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council).

21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 7 September 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no submitted public questions.

23 THEMED ITEM - UPDATE ON LOCAL POLICING MODEL

The Panel was informed that the Police Crime Commissioner had requested that the item be deferred to a future meeting. Members were informed that Thames Valley Police were currently conducting a review of the model which had included a survey, qualitative and quantitative data. There had been an internal Force meeting with the Local Police Area commanders and, as a result of that, some changes to the model were planned but further work needed to be carried out by the Force to understand the consequences.

24 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER PROGRESS REPORT - POLICE AND CRIME PLAN STRATEGIC PRIORITY - POLICE ETHICS AND REFORM

The Police and Crime Commissioner informed the Panel that his Police and Crime Plan set out the following aims for addressing, Police Ethics and Reform:

- Improved routes into services from police and other agencies for victims and witnesses who require support

The PCC referred to the launch of the Victims First service and the initial teething problems caused by staffing problems; mainly caused by the delays of vetting new recruits. This had now been addressed. In the first 6 months of this current financial year, the Hub had received referrals of 2,226 victims and had provided support to 889 people. In response to a question, the PCC reported that not all people were referred because there were occasions where people who contacted the Hub just required support and advice.

Reference was made to Community Safety Fund initiatives where funding was provided to Community Safety Partnerships and the examples provided in the report which provide funding for Youth Offending Services, Youth Justice Services and to vulnerable young people and adults linked to organised crime groups.

- Clarification of processes for referring on issues that sit best with other authorities

The PCC made reference to incidents of “101 calls” to the Police which particularly increased on a Friday afternoon, partially because many other authorities and agencies were closed. The Police were expected to pick these calls up and this impacted on the service.

- Encourage accelerated up-take of new technology in order to prevent, reduce and detect crime

The PCC made reference to the failure to adopt GPS tagging on recently released criminals from prisons. In his opinion this would drastically cut down re-offending rates for crimes such as serious violence, serious sexual crimes or serious theft or burglary. The technology was available to tag recently released offenders and introducing this would have a dramatic effect on re-offending. The PCC reported that funding had been put into this. The Chief Constable reported that there were two elements to tagging; those people who had voluntarily agreed to be tagged and there were a number of these devices used in police areas within Thames Valley. Also there were pilots being run in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice, however, there were concerns regarding the cost of this, as there would be savings for the Ministry of Justice, but there was uncertainty regarding who would fund the scheme as it would create additional workload and costs for the Police.

Reference was made to an initial predictive analytics project, which was a programme which predicted where crime was going to happen. The Chief Constable reported that work had taken place with Children’s Services at Oxfordshire and the project looked at predicting the types and profiles of young people who could commit crimes. Data and analytics were used and the initial feedback had been positive. There were some ethical issues with using such data profiling / artificial intelligence but there was lots of useful data which could be used to help in the fight against crime. Working with partners, predictions could be made on potential individuals who may commit crimes.

- Development of Strategies to improve perceptions of police among young people

The PCC referred to the successful bid for funding for the Early Intervention Funding, with the Thames

Valley, being one of only a third of Police Forces who had been successful in receiving funding. The Panel placed on record their thanks to the PCC for the work which had been carried out in submitting the successful bid. Reference was made to the good collaborative work which had taken place with the CSPs in the area, in submitting the bid.

RESOLVED

That the report and the update provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner be welcomed and noted.

25 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER PROGRESS REPORT - POLICE AND CRIME PLAN STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 - VULNERABILITY

The Police and Crime Commissioner informed the Panel that his Police and Crime Plan set out the following aims for addressing vulnerability:

- Improved recognition across the criminal justice system of mental health distress experienced by both victims and offenders leading to, (a) referral pathways into appropriate support agencies and (b) Improved access to mental health care from those in contact with the criminal justice system
- Better understanding by police and partners of the extent and nature of elder abuse, followed by positive actions taken to address the issues uncovered
- Improved police awareness and robust prosecution of those practising 'more hidden' forms of abuse, including coercive control, stalking, harassment, honour based abuse (HBA) and forced marriage
- Improvements in criminal justice experience and outcomes for victims of domestic and sexual abuse
- Ongoing assessment by police of the benefits arising from Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs), including the current arrangements of 9 MASHs serving Thames Valley.

Reference was made to the work which Police Officers carried out, relating to work around safeguarding and vulnerability, and the culminative psychological impact this had on police officers. A question was asked whether police officers had access to routine psychological support to enable resilience to such work. The Chief Constable reported that as a matter of course, those officers who worked in Domestic Abuse Units, Child Abuse Units were required to sit down and have a health care screening with the Occupational Health Unit on a regular basis, or to go elsewhere if required. Line managers were trained in this area and officers could also discuss any issues outside of their line managers if required.

The PCC referred to the ongoing assessment by the Police of the benefits of 9 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASHs) serving the Thames Valley region, with one each in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, one in Milton Keynes and six in Berkshire. There were too many and this number needed to be reduced to improve efficiency and expertise.

In response to a question, the PCC informed the Panel that the work of MASHs was critical and referred to the work of the Oxfordshire MASH and the work which had been carried out on the scale of "Bullfinch".

The PCC was asked for his view on the recent comments made by Sara Thornton, the Chair of National Police Chief Council, that the Police should focus on crimes such as burglaries and violent crimes and not so much on "non-crimes" such as misogyny, where no real offence has been committed. The PCC replied that he supported those comments and referred to the Home Office Select Committee, which

recommended major changes to the police response to new and growing crimes. More traditional crimes were rising as well as crimes involving serious violence, which was putting severe pressure on already overstretched police forces. The police had to prioritise crimes committed and those real hate crimes which were committed were a serious issue and would continue to be treated as such by the police. The PCC commented that the vast majority of those incidents classed as hate crimes, could be considered as incidents of rudeness, and almost all, did not end up in Court.

The PCC in response to a question, reported that in relation to improved police awareness of the more hidden forms of abuse, coercive control etc., there was now greater police awareness of these types of crimes, with greater police training on stalking, harassment, honour-based abuse and forced marriage. The reporting of these crimes had to be improved and the message had to get out to those “harder to reach communities”.

The Chief Constable informed the Panel that there had been successful campaigns around hidden forms of abuse, such as Hate Crimes, FGM, Honour Based Abuse, on-line abuse and Modern Slavery. These campaigns involved closely working with CSPs, Safeguarding Boards and health partners.

A discussion took place on the work which the public sector and police could do in relation to “County Lines”, particularly in relation to those vulnerable people who were targeted by criminal gangs (cuckooing), and on the success or otherwise of the Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs). Related to this, the PCC was asked for his view on criminals being able to purchase mobile phones and SIM cards, particularly from supermarkets without identification.

The PCC reported that it was generally acknowledged that CRCs had not worked. Regarding the purchasing of mobile phones and SIM cards without identification; this was not an issue he had considered. The issue would be around civil liberties and the freedom of individuals. The PCC said he would look at mobile phones.

The Chief Constable in response to the points made about “County Lines” reported that the Police were working closely with local authorities and Registered Social Landlords, and used both full and partial Closure Orders very effectively. Work was taking place with the newly established County Lines Unit, with information shared between the Unit and TVP.

The PCC reported that “County Lines” needed to be solved on three fronts, the countries where the drugs were being manufactured, the system of how the drugs were imported into this country and the hubs which were distributing the drugs. None of these were in the Thames Valley area. The problem was that if a County Line was closed, another one would open up. Young people were taken advantage of. Reference was also made to the reduction in the use of “Stop and Search” which exacerbated the problem of “County Lines”.

Reference was made to regular standardised meetings with the CPS, to ensure better joined up working. Previously there had not been good joined up working. In relation to the Local Criminal Justice Board, the PCC reported that he would be proposing that the Deputy PCC chairs the Board.

Reference was made to a Rape “Gold” group, which was a group which consisted of all the key players, brought together to improve the positive outcome for victims, how the investigations of rape could be improved, how to learn from best practise, discussion on disclosure issues and improving the quality of investigation of these cases.

RESOLVED

That the report and update provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner be welcomed and noted.

26 SUMMARY OF HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT INTO POLICING FOR THE FUTURE

The Panel was provided with a summary of the recently published report by the Home Affairs Committee on “Policing for the Future” and the Police and Crime Commissioner was asked for his views on the findings of the report.

The PCC reported that he agreed with many of the findings in the report. Nationally there had been an upturn in crime, although in the Thames Valley this had been less. Reference was made to the changes to the recording of crime which had affected the crime figures. For instance one crime could involve a few incidents, which had to be recorded individually. The Home Office had also changed the criteria of certain crimes, with for example household burglary now including outside sheds.

The overall picture, however, was of rising crime and a reduction in the number of Police Officers. There had been a reduction of 20,000 Police Officers nationally; the Thames Valley Police budget had dropped in real terms, by £100m since 2010/11. Those who committed crimes which went undetected, carried on committing more crimes and the cycle continued.

The PCC referred to a briefing paper in the “Police Professional” in which the leadership within the Home Office was questioned. An example of this was in relation to the proposal for the PCC to take over the responsibility for the Fire Service within the Thames Valley. There had been little support and leadership from the Home Office to undertake this complicated process.

In response to a question on whether there was enough being done in relation to on-line fraud cases, the PCC reported that unfortunately the problem of on-line fraud was such, that only a very small number of on-line fraud cases were investigated. Much more funding was required to investigate these cases, as on-line fraud was complicated and expensive to investigate which was evidenced by the recent Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS) fraud case which cost £7m to investigate. The PCC commented that fraud required tackling at a national level more effectively.

The PCC informed the Panel that Thames Valley Police was in a better place than most police forces in terms of neighbourhood policing and Child Sexual Exploitation. With neighbourhood policing Thames Valley Police had retained the services of Police Community Support Officers who were a critical part of neighbourhood policing and were particularly crucial in counter terrorism.

After the Operation Bullfinch investigation into CSE in Oxfordshire, Thames Valley Police and its partners have continued to keep CSE as a high priority within the force area.

The PCC was asked for his views on the future of national policing, particularly with the present Police organisational structure of 43 separate police forces, all of varied size, with different levels of capability and specialism. The PCC reported that Thames Valley Police Force area was three times the size of some of the other Force areas and there needed to be a look at the Police structure in the country. Specialist capabilities needed to be put into central hubs to enable all Police Forces to access these services and to enable the smaller Police Forces to hold these services to account. This would also provide huge savings.

Reference was made to the major impact of increased employer contribution rates which were required for Police pensions. This would have a major impact on the funding challenges facing forces, effectively placing an additional 9.7% on the salary costs of police officers. The PCC said he had written

to all Thames Valley region's MPs, expressing his concerns at this additional burden on Police budgets.

RESOLVED

That the Home Office Committee report on "Policing into the Future" be noted and the Police and Crime Commissioner be commended for his continual lobbying of the Home Office for greater Police funding, and the Panel supports the Police and Crime Commissioner in his continuous lobbying.

27 THAMES VALLEY POLICE CONTACT MANAGEMENT PLATFORM - PROJECT UPDATE

The Panel was provided with an update report on the implementation of TVP's Contact Management Platform. The PCC reported that during testing of the system, a number of performance, integration and system instability issues had been identified. It had been agreed that additional essential testing and resolution of systems infrastructure problems and instability issues be completed, before the system went live, in April 2019.

The PCC reported that the additional £4m which had been allocated to the CMP project would come out of the Police Reserves budget.

28 CHAIRMAN UPDATE / PCC UPDATE

The Panel was provided with a report which presented details of topical policing issues since the last meeting of the Panel.

Discussion took place regarding the on-going problems associated with "101 calls" to the Police. The Chief Constable acknowledged that there had been some problems with residents getting through to the system and he agreed to provide the Panel with statistics on the performance.

Reference was made to the announcement of the retirement of the Chief Constable at the end of March 2019 and it was reported that subject to the recruitment and selection process, a Confirmation Hearing for the appointment of the new Chief Constable would be held on 1 February 2019.

29 IMPLICATIONS OF THE HM GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION PAPER "TRANSFORMING THE RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE"

The Panel was provided with a report outlining details of the consultation exercise which had taken place which had sought views on a number of specific measures intended to prevent and tackle domestic abuse which would be taken forward through new legislation.

Discussion took place around the difficulties faced by some victims of domestic abuse, of attending Court. This led to a number of adjournments. It was agreed that there needed to be changes made to the Criminal Justice process to enable greater support to be given to domestic violence victims and to speed up the process. Reference was made to the pilot scheme which had taken place between TVP Criminal Justice, the Crown Prosecution Service and Aylesbury Crown Court to fast track domestic abuse cases in the Crown Court.

The Panel was informed that the Safer & Stronger Bucks Partnership Board in association with partners had organised a Domestic Abuse Big Tent Event on the 5th February 2019, which was to be held at Aylesbury Vale District Council. Members would be provided with details and would be welcome to attend.

30 REPORT OF THE COMPLAINTS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Panel noted the two complaints considered by the Complaints Sub-Committee on 7 September 2018.

31 RECOMMENDATION MONITORING

The report was noted.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted and it was agreed that the PCC would provide a report to the next meeting on the outcome of the bidding for the Early Intervention Fund.

33 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was on 1 February 2019 at 11.00am at Reading Borough Council Offices.

CHAIRMAN