

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 3 November 2023 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.14 pm.

Members present

Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes City Council) (Chairman), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Peter Brazier (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Phil Chapman (Cherwell District Council), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Peter Gammond (Co-Opted Independent Member), Councillor Mark Lygo (Oxford City Council), Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes City Council - co-optee), Councillor Vicky Poole (West Berkshire Council), Councillor Simon Rouse (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Mabu Shaik (Slough Borough Council) and Councillor Simon Werner (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead)

Others in attendance

Councillor Chris Johnson (Wokingham Borough Council) (Substitute Member).

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner).

Agenda Item

24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Cllr Culverhouse (Buckinghamshire Council – co-optee), Cllr Kandy Jefferies (Bracknell Forest Council), Pamela Mackenzie-Reilly (Co-opted Independent Member) and Cllr Stephen Newton (Wokingham Borough Council) (Cllr Chris Johnson substituting).

25 Minutes

The Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 15 September 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

26 Fighting serious organised crime - County Lines and the protection of the vulnerable

A report of the PCC set out the activities by the OPCC and Thames Valley Police in

delivering the strategic priority of fighting serious organised crime, as set out in the Police & Criminal Justice Plan 2021-2025. The report before the Panel contains a myriad of different risks but the focus in the report was around vulnerability, particularly around County Lines.

The PCC reported that serious organised crime can come in many forms but the report provided a particular focus on protecting vulnerable people. Serious Organised Crime did not only taken place in big cities with the reality that this crime took many forms and took place in many areas, including rural areas.

There were lots of different crimes which were related to serious organised crime such as vehicle crime and the stealing of catalytic converters which was a sophisticated crime as these were stolen to order.

The Rural Crime Team have made great efforts to tackle the trade in stolen vehicles and machinery, supporting the introduction of new legislation. Retail crime and the theft of vehicles and machinery had to be identified as serious organised crime.

The Panel was informed that a Serious Organised Crime was County lines. This was a violent and exploitative form of drug distribution. A common feature of county lines is the exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults who are instructed to deliver and/or store drugs, and associated money or weapons, to dealers or drug users, locally or in other counties.

A report was also provided to the Panel which summarised the Home Office guidance on Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines.

The PCC referred to Police Forces looking to disrupt operations, but it was difficult to measure the disruptions of the criminal network. One such disruption resulted in recently Thames Valley Police making 98 arrests during a week of drug busts targeting county lines.

Members' Questions:

- (1) To help the fight against "County Lines", what training do professionals in other organisations receive (teachers, health workers, social workers etc) to prevent young people from being coerced into such crimes.

[The PCC replied that it was not only the Police that were trained. There was specialised training, but more could be done. There was lots of training carried out around Modern Slavery. Where someone is suspected of being a victim of modern slavery then they should be considered a child or adult at risk and the relevant child or adult at risk operational guidance followed. The Force will seek support from relevant partner agencies and address any immediate safeguarding requirements. A referral may then be made into the National Referral Mechanism in line with the operational guidance.]

The biggest difficulty was getting into the NHS and providing training. Partners needed to be pushed more and look at the risks. All had a provider responsibility and a serious violence duty which was to ensure relevant services worked together to share information and worked together on interventions to prevent and reduce serious crimes within their communities.

There was the Hospital Navigator Scheme where trained individuals, based primarily in A & E departments, who talked to at risk patients and provided support that aimed to prevent their involvement in future serious crime.

The message and knowledge was much more difficult to communicate in primary care settings and work could be carried out through MASHs to get the message out to partner professionals.]

- (2) There have been reported cases of Modern Slavery in the care system. Was there any awareness campaign or planned training provided in the care system regarding Modern Slavery as members of the public regularly came into contact with carers?

[The PCC replied that there was a question of how far should the message and influence go on this. It was not just the responsibility of TVP, but of all statutory partners and care providers to assist the Police in giving out shared messages on modern slavery. Representatives of local authorities also had a role to play in terms of the training but with the Police co-ordinating the training.]

- (3) The PCC was asked what problems did the lack information sharing across partners and agencies because of restrictions caused by GDPR cause in the prevention of these crimes?

[The PCC replied that there needed to a cultural change with a move away from ethical concerns about sharing data, to it being unethical not to share the data when there were potential risks involved. Reference was made to the data project around serious violence in the Thames Valley, which was looking how to share the data more freely to improve things.

In relation to MASHs there was a project which was looking at sharing individualised data, with all the right safeguards in place amongst agencies for those individuals who were at risk of violence or exploitation. Work was taking place with the Information Commissions Office. There was some live data going into that and there will be some useful tools coming out before the end of the year.

There were three local authorities who had yet to sign up to the project but progress was being made.]

- (4) In terms of collaboration with other Forces, the PCC was asked about the work which took place with the Customs and Border Police to combat Modern Slavery?

[The PCC replied that there was a reliance on regional partners. Thames Valley, whilst not having any borders, particularly international borders had good operational links with the regionalised organised crime unit who would be dealing with the Border Force, in terms of the importation of weapons. This was why serious organised crime and exploitation was a complex picture in terms of organisation within the force because of the regional and force units working on protecting vulnerable people team and the violence reduction unit.]

- (5) The PCC was asked how children were treated who were involved in this serious organised crime. What measures are being taken to ensure those children affected are back to normality?

[The PCC reported sometimes the victim and perpetrators were not easily identifiable, because of the complexity. There was a national referral mechanism which was encouraging for Thames Valley in terms of referrals made, as the Force was very good at using the system.

It was acknowledged that children were often victims of exploitation, however, there were some young people who were perpetrators of crimes and were causing harm to communities. There were some young people who were on the cusp of being a victim and being a perpetrator and it was difficult for the Police whether to make a referral or to charge. There were risks in dealing with these cases.

Local Authority Youth Offending Teams supported individuals and there was a PCC funded programme in Milton Keynes and a Home Office Homicide Prevention Fund for Slough. The PCC said he hoped to roll out programmes across the whole of Thames Valley.]

- (6) What preventative work is being carried out with schools to educate teachers and youth workers, by providing them with information and resources on County Lines and other crime issues, helping to challenge young people's preconceptions and raise awareness of this exploitation? Reference was made to an event which took place outside Reading Football Club called "A Code". This was a real street presentation and focussed on County Lines and raising awareness for young people.

[The PCC referred to the "Our Choices" programme in schools which had been delivered in Oxfordshire and was hoped to be rolled out all over Thames Valley. This programme was designed to bridge the gap between Year 6 and Year 7 when children are less dependent on their parents and this was a big risk point for children.

The PCC said he was to rationalise the visits that several police officers may make to schools over a year as this was not well co-ordinated. The programme of education given to schools needed to be more coherent. The PCC also commented on how TVP engaged with parents who had a responsibility for their children and to spot signs of possible exploitation etc , not just teachers and health professionals.]

- (7) The PCC was asked about the outcomes and whether things had changed or improved as a result of the strategic priority of fighting serious organised crime?

[The PCC referred to details provided in the report where work has taken place across the Regional Organised Crime Unit network nationally to standardise these assessments. The PCC had also proposed work across the South East in order to standardise assessments across Forces. Disruptions defined as "Major" increased from 33 to 59 in the year to July 2023 compared with the previous year.]

There had been a presentation given at a recent PCC Performance and Accountability Meeting Liaison Meeting with the Chief Constable showing data and comparisons with previous years of the disruptions of serious organised crime and this would be shared with the Police and Crime Panel. [Action: PCC].

- (8) In terms of the wider partnership work and in particular the Choices Programme, the PCC was asked whether the strategic approach was consistent, in relation to dealing with perpetrators and victims who have been exploited. It would be difficult for officers to distinguish between the two, particularly if young people do not have a choice if they were being exploited.

[The PCC replied that it was about some of the choices some young people made. It was all about making good healthy choices through your life, whether it be financial, some of the people you associate with and the things which you were involved in which could lead to exploitation. It was acknowledged that there were young people who did not have a choice due to their family backgrounds, however, the majority of people would make a choice at an early age which was a reasonable choice and perfectly innocent in their perception at the time. They became entrapped and this was where they were exploited.]

In terms of prevention, educating people of the risks they were taking and how they come become entrapped and exploited was important.]

- (9) Reference was made to the brilliant work which the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) did, and that Members should go and have a look at what they did in terms of safeguarding young people.

[The PCC said that every local authority had a MASH and he would encourage all Members to have a look at the work which was done. Reference was made to the automated response service which speeded up responses to risks identified. An example was given of schools being notified automatically if a child was at risk for a reason. This would enable the school to tackle the problem and be made aware quickly if the child was at risk.]

The Chair congratulated the PCC on County Lines Intensification Week which saw 98 arrests but asked whether it would be possible to have a break down of the arrests and what end of the criminal scale were they (young drug sellers or a kingpin of a

criminal organisation). The PCC said he would happily find out and the information would be available around crime type. A national summary was carried out annually and broken down into local authority areas. **[Action:PCC]**

RESOLVED - That the report of the PCC be noted and the information provided in the answers to Members' questions be noted.

27 Thames Valley Police Violence Against Women and Girls Education Campaign

The PCC presented a report which provided details on a TVP Education campaign for Violence against Women and Girls.

The Panel was informed that TVP were working with Lisa Squire the mother of murdered student Libby Squire, and a specialist agency TMC, to produce a PSHE education package for 14-16 year olds.

The education package would put two key messages out of looking after your friends and to report non-contact sexual offences. The encouragement of young people to report non-contact sexual offences was to enable the intelligence from their reports to help police identify hotspots and identify perpetrators. The killer of Libby had displayed an escalation in non-contact sexual offences before his horrendous crime.

Since being launched in February 2023, work has taken place with TMC to produce an audit of existing campaigns and materials, to hold focus groups at four Thames Valley schools to get feedback on the plans and the holding of a Project Advisory Team meeting to ask a range of experts their thoughts on the programme.

Members' Questions

(1) Will this education campaign be rolled out to partner organisations to get the message out as far and wide as possible? Reference was made to arts and culture who helped get the message out there, in the form of plays and theatre and telling a story which would be more engaging for young people.

[The PCC replied that the focus of this will be getting into schools with PSHE making it available more widely across Thames Valley. There will also be broader exposure with the use of social media, working with partner agencies. There would be a film on Libby's mother which would grab the attention of young people as she describes from a personal perspective and raise awareness greater than anyone else could.]

The real focus of the campaign was getting in schools and hopefully eventually getting it into the curriculum. Work had been done on County Lines, on "sexting", and there was funding from the crime prevention budget to do this preventative work.

The PCC said he could see no reason why this work could not be extended to colleges and Universities.]

- (2) The PCC was asked how prepared were TVP to act on the usually non reported sexual offences which were not always reported, and which sometimes led to far serious offences such as the murder?

[The PCC replied that the murderer of Libby Squires did not have his earlier offences reported. This was not a case of the Police missing something. It really mattered that these offences, no matter how small, were reported to the Police. Victims needed the confidence to come forward, although the allegations may not lead to a conviction. This was about intelligence gathering and it would be on record as being reported and would build a wider picture if other allegations were made and would lead to escalation if required.]

There were much better processes now in place with "Red Box" offences prioritised in the escalation process. There were also better relationships with the CPS who understood that looking at minor offences could lead to more serious offences.]

- (3) How was the PCC working with TVP on improving the perceived culture within certain other forces, to enable women and girls to have the confidence to report sexual offences to the Police, no matter how small the offences may seem?

[The PCC said that he was not belittling the offences and was not playing down the sexual offences which were committed. The campaign was to identify early offending before it escalated. It was a really important point, that there was sometimes a lack of reporting of some of these offences, as within the public, there was a playing down of some of those offences. Reference was made to the "Do the Right Thing" campaign in terms of the importance of reporting all crimes.]

In terms of policing, particularly the Metropolitan Police, although TVP was not immune, it was important that the public had confidence in the Police that they would deal with crimes and that means Police attended all burglaries, shoplifting etc. It was about the Police being responsive to all those issues and it was important that message was put across to the public.]

- (4) The PCC was asked that as part of the intelligence gathering, did engagement take place with security staff in pubs and clubs to put warnings out about safety as a preventative measure.

[The PCC referred to the vigilant campaign which was undercover and unformed officers working with CCTV controllers in the night time economy. Training is given to door staff on behaviour, what to look out for etc. TVP was trying to bring people along with them and work took place with venues and local authorities to help identify where the risk was and to educate door staff.]

RESOLVED -That the report of the PCC and the information provided in answers to Members' questions be noted.

28 Update on Thames Valley CCTV Partnership

The Panel was reminded that in April 2022, the PCC set out his strategic vision for a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership. The report of the PCC provided the Panel with an update on the proposed model.

The PCC reported that TVP would own the system and equipment for public space CCTV and be responsible for the maintenance and employment of the staff.

The Panel was informed that Phase 1 was currently underway and involved upgrading the CCTV systems for Slough and Milton Keynes City, with both areas to be monitored from a Milton Keynes Command Suite.

Phase 2 would involve Oxfordshire local authorities and a consultation took place to seek feedback on the operating model to be delivered and the funding formula to be used to calculate the annual local authority revenue contributions.

The options were Oxfordshire having its own Command Suite or whether their cameras would also be integrated into the Milton Keynes Command Suite. Feedback on the consultation would be reported to the TVP CCTV Programme Board in December 2023 with recommendations then made to the Chief Constable and PCC.

The CCTV Project Team would continue to engage with Buckinghamshire Council who have decided not to join the Thames Valley CCTV Partnership at this time and will now be monitoring all CCTV for Buckinghamshire from their Control Room in High Wycombe, as well as local authorities in Berkshire who will be included in Phase 3 of this programme.

The PCC pointed out that CCTV was not a statutory responsibility of the Police or local authorities, however, financial contributions were required from local authorities who had a responsibility for community safety. There were advantages of having more local authorities signed up to the partnership in terms of costs, a joined-up network of CCTV which would help the Police and the local authorities. Maintenance costs would be reduced in terms of maintaining cameras and being able to replace broken cameras.

Members' Questions:

- (1) The PCC was asked about the location of control rooms not having the local knowledge of other local authority areas and not being as responsive which would create a time lag. Existing control rooms in local authority areas had that local knowledge and without this, for example there could be delays on environmental offences, the tracking of known shoplifters etc.

[The PCC replied that this system was about an important bit of public safety. If local authorities such as Windsor and Maidenhead and Buckinghamshire had CCTV systems which worked that would be great, but it would be good if the local links were also linked to the Police. The PCC referred to the Vale of White Horse district

which was a huge area, but the CCTV control unit was in Abingdon, so it would have been difficult for the staff at the control unit knowing all parts of the geography of a large area, but over time this local knowledge would be gained. This would also be gained from a Milton Keynes control unit.]

- (2) Reference was made to Slough which did not have the CCTV infrastructure and the coverage and this was needed for a growing population. The PCC was asked whether there were plans to increase the coverage in Slough and other areas.

[The PCC pointed out that CCTV was not the solution to all problems; it did not solve everything. At the moment, there were no immediate plans to the expansion of the CCTV coverage but a stabilisation of the system. However, subject to the financial settlements agreed with local authorities, that could be an option in the future.

There would need to be a formula of funding between the partnership on how further CCTV coverage could be funded. There was an additional £1m in TVP's budget for this strategic vision for a Thames Valley CCTV Partnership, but there was no budgetary provision for an expansion.

The PCC talked about the importance of installing CCTV cameras in locations where they were needed and not just where they were wanted. Discussions would be required further down the line.

The PCC commented that funding was available for use for charity purposes and some funding went to community groups for CCTV coverage for a deterrent purpose and for recording, rather than for monitoring. There may be a case that this funding could go to Parish Councils but it could not be provided for borough councils.]

- (3) The PCC was asked about funding from s106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money and whether this money could be used for CCTV?

[The PCC said that in terms of expansion this could be an option but over time there may be an increase in the CCTV budget and local authorities may want to contribute more funds. Regarding CIL money, the Police were not part of the statutory regulations for receiving CIL money.]

- (4) Reference was made to Buckinghamshire Council's transition to a Unitary Council where they inherited four separate CCTV control rooms all operating differently over the County. With Aylesbury Police Station control room the cameras were decommissioned, either going to High Wycombe or Milton Keynes. How was the PCC making sure those cameras were being redeployed and people with local knowledge were involved?

[The PCC commented that there was a control room in Aylesbury with Police staff doing the monitoring with significant funding by Buckinghamshire Council, whereas in Wycombe the control room was staffed by Council employees, with TVP providing significant funding. This highlighted the confusing and complex system that

operated.

The Aylesbury cameras would be monitored in the Buckinghamshire Control room in Wycombe with the police staff moving to the Milton Keynes control room.]

(5) The PCC was asked for details on the cameras in the new contract.

[The PCC replied that there was the video management system, and the existing cameras would still be used. There would be a programme of replacing cameras with more up to date cameras. There were opportunities to develop technology. Subject to the regulations, cameras could be used for ANPR purposes. There were legal restrictions for using ANPR on all cameras.]

(6) The PCC was asked about the transition arrangements for moving the monitoring of Slough CCTV to Milton Keynes.

[The PCC said that he was confident that the transition on 31 December will run smoothly.]

(7) The PCC was asked where would the police staffing of the control rooms come from, particularly with staff at existing control rooms not wanting to relocate? Also there were already a number of vacancies in TVP and there was only two months to appoint control room staff.

[The PCC said there would be a recruitment process but with people having the opportunity to transfer or taking redundancy.]

In response to a point made about control rooms being monitored 24/7, the PCC said that at the moment not all control rooms operated 24/7. There were ongoing negotiations with local authorities as part of the partnership and discussions on hours would be included.]

(8) The Chair commented that the ambitions of this going live on 31 December was challenging, particularly with decisions required on revenue funding from local authorities. Reference was made to the budgetary challenges that local authorities had made the revenue funding of the project difficult.

[The PCC reiterated that he was confident that the scheme could be delivered although there were financial decisions required from different councils. Milton Keynes had put in capital funding but had said that they did not have any revenue funding. This would have implications on how Milton Keynes was supported CCTV.]

The PCC reiterated that local authorities had a statutory duty in terms of community safety.]

RESOLVED - That the report of the PCC and the information given in the answers to Members questions be noted.

29 Annual Assurance Report 2022 from the Joint Independent Audit Committee to the PCC for Thames Valley and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley

The Panel was provided with the Annual Assurance Report 2022 which explained how the Independent Audit Committee to the PCC and Chief Constable of TVP had complied with each of its specific responsibilities, during the last twelve months covering the period December 2021 to December 2022.

The PCC reported that in relation to the 2021/22 Peel Inspection, when the Force was graded as requiring Improvement in the areas of responding to the public; and good use of resources, there was soon to be another report. The Panel was informed that in relation to Contact Management there were still issues with “drop off times” on calls which would be reflected in the report.

Part of the reason for delays in answering calls has been due to the work which has taken place in improving of crime data integrity which has reduced the capacity of call handlers and added on average an extra 6 minutes to calls.

The Panel noted the report.

30 Update on the Panel's Task and Finish Groups

The Panel received updates on the membership of the Panel’s Task and Finish Groups.

In relation to the Strategy for Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Task and Finish Group, the Panel was informed that Cllr Shaista Aziz, the Chair had been replaced as Oxford City Council’s representative on the PCP.

The Chair of the Panel asked that due to Cllr Aziz’s expertise in VAWG and Domestic Abuse that she continues to be the Chair of this Task and Finish Group. To enable this to happen the Panel can appoint co-opted Members to Task and Finish Groups and it is recommended that approval be given to Cllr Aziz appointment as a co-opted Member of the VAWG Task and Finish Group.

Oxford City Council’s new representative to the Panel is Cllr Mark Lygo and he has asked to be appointed to the VAWG Task and Finish Group.

In relation to the Road Safety Task and Finish Group, the Chair updated the Panel on the first meeting of the Task and Finish Group which took place on 1 November 2023 and looked at the draft Road Safety Strategy and heard from the PCC, an officer from the Roads Policing Unit and a Road Safety officer from a local authority.

In relation to the Budget Task and Finish Group, Cllr Simon Werner asked to be appointed to the Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED – (1) That approval be given to the appointment of Cllr Aziz as a co-

opted Member of the VAWG Task and Finish Group.

(2) That Cllr Mark Lygo be appointed to the VAWG Task and Finish Group.

(3) That Cllr Simon Werner be appointed to the Budget Task and Finish Group.

31 Updates from the Chair of the Panel, the PCC and the Topical Issues Report

The Panel was provided with a report which provided details of recent crime and police topical issues.

National Reduction in Burglaries

A Member referred to a constituent who had recently been burgled and within 24 hours a burglary advice pack had been delivered to households in the area and a detective attended the burglary scene within 40 hours and had downloaded CCTV footage. This was impressive.

Reference was made to the use of social media when Police were called to challenging incidents to deal with and the filming which took place. This was corrosive and difficult to tackle and made the Polices' job very difficult and only looked at situations negatively. The PCC agreed that the use of social media when officers were doing their jobs was difficult and could prejudice investigations.

The PCC referred to the death of PC Andy Harper and the restraint which was used in arresting the offenders. The Police had the body armour footage to show the other side.

Update on Recruitment of PCSOs – The PCC said he could circulate updated information on this. **[Action: PCC]**

Contact Management Staff – A Member commented that he was pleased that Contact Management staff would be receiving a retention payment.

Shoplifting

The PCC was thanked for his community engagement in High Wycombe when he came to talk about how the Police was going to tackle shoplifting. The PCC reported that a strategy on shoplifting would be available around Christmas.

Reference was made to small shops which are raided by shoplifters on a daily basis which was costing owners a lot of money and was a risk to their safety. The PCC stated that any danger to shop workers should be actioned, but he acknowledged that there were areas where TVP could do better. There were offenders who the Police were trying to prosecute for several offences. The PCC said that there did need to be better information sharing between TVP and local businesses.

The Panel noted the report.

32 Work Programme

The Panel noted that the item on Race Action Plan had been deferred and it was asked that this be added to another date in the work programme.

The work programme was noted.