

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 27 January 2023 in Paralympic Meeting Room, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.30 pm

Members Present

Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes Council – Co-Opted Member) (Chair), Councillor Eddie Reeves (Cherwell District Council) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Balvinder Bains (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor Peter Brazier (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor David Cannon (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Peter Gammond (Independent Co-Opted Member), Councillor Maria Gee (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor John Harrison (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Simon Rouse (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Howard Woollaston (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council).

Member not in Attendance

Councillor Diko Walcott (Oxford City Council)

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner) and Martin Thornley (Chief Finance Officer, OPCC)

If you have a query please contact Khalid Ahmed, Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel Scrutiny Officer (Tel: 07990 368048; Email: khalid.ahmed@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

The Panel welcomed the new Independent Co-Opted Member to the Panel, Peter Gammond and Councillor Howard Woollaston (West Berkshire Council), who had replaced Councillor Claire Rowles.

The Panel placed on record their appreciation of the service Councillor Claire Rowles gave to the Panel during her time as a Member of the Panel.

48/23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

49/23 SCRUTINY OF THE PROPOSED POLICE PRECEPT - BUDGET PAPERS FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEETING BETWEEN THE PCC AND THE CHIEF CONSTABLE

The Panel was provided with the budget papers which were presented to and agreed at the Performance and Accountability meeting between the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable on 19th January 2023.

The PCC introduced the item and explained the reasoning behind the proposed £15 (Band D) increase to the Council Tax precept. There were significant pressures on budgets with inflationary pressure, rising energy and fuel costs. The increase would enable 80 additional police officers to be recruited by the end of this financial year.

The PCC responded to the following written questions:-

- (1) The risk to the budget of significant variances on key uncertain assumptions such as inflation, supply costs and pay settlements is high. It isn't clear from the budget papers how much these assumptions have been stress tested. Can the PCC outline how he has satisfied himself through scenario planning and sensitivity analyses that he can maintain the required level of police service without needing to materially impact general reserves or headcount?

[Throughout the budget setting period there has been an iterative process of considering the risk and assumptions that contribute towards building the budget. The inflation assumptions in the budget were subjected to rigorous review during preparation. Some budget versions discussed internally included higher inflation assumptions, and the impact and trade-offs are well understood. For example, the sensitivity of the budget to selected impacts is:

- Pay: 1% unfunded increase in officer & staff pay = £2.6m impact in 2023/24 (£4.1m full year impact)*
- Energy: 10% increase in energy costs (without capping mechanism) = £0.2m impact in 2023/24*
- Other costs: 1% increase in general inflation = £0.5m impact in 2023/24.*

Unfunded elements of increases would be expected to impact reserves and service levels. In the event that costs were, for example, £5m higher, reserves are sufficient to cope with increased costs in the short term. In the medium term, difficult decisions would have to be taken through a trade-off between the following factors:

- reducing costs through cancelling some of the growth plans funded from the precept increase*
- requiring the Force Review to make additional savings by reducing existing service levels*
- reducing allocation to reserves for long term property transformation and renewal*

Unfunded pay rises in line with inflation are not affordable from either reserves or cost savings. For example, an unfunded inflation-linked pay rise of 10% would cost £32m per annum, far above the realistic level through cost saving initiatives, and quickly using up available reserves. The assumption used for police pay is that included in the most recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). If the Home Office increase pay being the 2% set out in the CSR – which would certainly be a welcome support for police officers in Thames Valley – this will need to be funded by central government and sustained through increased grant. This position is in line with the majority of other PCCs.]

(2) What will be the impact of the investment in additional headcount on vetting and is it sufficient to address the more recent direction to police forces on vetting of existing staff?

[Seconded staff have been made permanent to address the demand and complexity increase which continues to grow. The requirement to be fully compliant with Authorised Professional Practice before HMIC returns to the force adds to demand and complexity. The structure of the team is under review to ensure that maximum efficiency is achieved. In order to meet the requirements of the MTFP bids, priorities and demand will be monitored through a gold structure and vetting will need stakeholders to engage with them around timing proposals re: Specials' intakes. Demand from recruiting staff posts is difficult to predict so the more controlled the approach is, the better.

The recent direction to forces on vetting will form part of the Gold Group remit.]

(3) The use of the increased precept flexibility to invest in contact management to improve 101 performance is welcome. Can the PCC provide more detail on what this additional investment will be focused on and the expected business benefits?

A fuller update on contact management improvements is included on the agenda for the Police & Crime Panel. The key points from this investment are as follows:

- Improvements to the quality and quantity of updates we provide to citizens*
- Enable two-way communication between the citizen and the forces*
- Improve our call analysis to better understand our demand*
- Improvements to our call handling and management systems such as virtual queuing and automated call diversion*
- Assess chat bot technology to reduce high volume low impact demand*

This will not only help to reduce 101 call handling times but will also help to transform the victims' journey and open up new reporting routes for the public.]

(4) Up until December 2022, the preparation for the budget was based on a £10 Police precept increase. PCCs were then given flexibility for a £15 Police precept increase. Could the PCC provide full details of what would not be in the budget if the flexible £15 proposal had not been given?

[With a £10 precept increases we were looking at some very difficult choices with regard to how we could support our priorities, make reasonable provision for inflation and for the longer term financial sustainability of the force. The final decisions had not

been made, we were continuing to work on the various competing demands whilst waiting for the draft Police settlement but those items under threat could have included additional resources to support Public Contact, Local Policing and preventing crime. Much of the increase in the cost is driven by inflation or essential growth which cannot be mitigated. The difference in the level of precept increases revenue by £4,783,068 which allows further discretionary growth which would otherwise not have been possible. Without the additional income, the areas most likely to be at risk would include:

- 80 additional officers above PUP
- Providing a robust infrastructure to improving the use of and number of specials to support local policing
- Additional resources for Violence Against Women and Girls to continue to strengthen our agenda for the VAWG priority
- Increasing resources for POLIT (Police Online Investigation Team)
- Investment to facilitate the development of a CCTV estate to help prevent and detect crime

(5) What are the indications of the implications of the McCloud judgement on pensions costs for TVP and how will this additional cost be funded?

[The McCloud Judgement on police pensions could have a serious future impact on the costs falling to forces although the Government has confirmed they will support these additional costs. This is unlikely to hit until 2024/25 at the earliest due to the tri-annual review of pension provisions.]

(6) Police Community Support Officers are an important resource for local policing throughout the Thames Valley in terms of visibility to the community and there has previously been a commitment to recruiting PCSOs. However, the budget papers indicate that vacancies have increased to 11.5% which is saving £12.6m. What will be the strategy for PCSOs which are vital for local communities?

[The total vacancy saving of £12.6m relates to all police staff, not just PCSOs.]

The vacancy factor is a reflection of the difficulty the force is experiencing in recruiting police staff including PCSO's not a desired direction of travel. Work is underway to improve our recruitment process as well as our retention, to reduce our vacancy levels and move closer to full strength, realistically this will take some time with the current market conditions, hence the financial reflection in the budget. Unfortunately, we are disadvantaged compared to private sector, by our vetting requirements and hence the consequential delay as well as pay levels.

The difficulties experienced in recruiting PCSO's is an area under active discussion between the incoming CC and the PCC in support of the neighbourhood policing priority. The workforce mix between officer, police staff and PCSO will be considered throughout the Force Review. The establishment of PCSOs remains unchanged and the Force is currently advertising to fill these vacancies.]

(7) Reference is made to Citizens in Policing with £600k supporting the recruitment of volunteer officers. What work will volunteer officers be carrying out and are these to supplement local policing and to substitute for the PCSO vacancies?

[Special Constables play an incredibly important role and are a valuable part of the workforce mix. Although unpaid, Special Constables (and other volunteers) require and deserve support, resource, training and equipment, hence the need for this increase in the budget. The ambition is to create a Special Constabulary that is around one-tenth the size of the regular force. As our numbers reach nearly 5,000 police officers, this means we should aim to have around 500 Special Constables over time.]

They will carry out a range of roles, as they do currently, be it response policing, community policing or indeed specialisms such as roads policing. The planned increase is a great opportunity to provide additional support for local policing.

As mentioned in answer to other questions, the Force is currently recruiting PCSOs and I am committed to maintaining the establishment over time. Therefore, whilst Special Constables will be a welcome additional element of visible policing, they are not intended to replace PCSOs.]

(8) How does the proposed force review which will involve reducing Police numbers correlate with the Home Office's drive to increase Police numbers?

[Phase one of the force review has not concluded yet hence it would be inappropriate to pre-empt the recommendations of the force review. The Force review is designed to deliver effectiveness and efficiency to support the force to deliver its priorities in the medium to longer term. Meeting both of these objectives is extremely challenging.]

The Police Uplift Programmes will conclude 31 March 2023 and TVP is anticipating being approx. 80 officers over our target and funding is provided within the MTFP to retain those officers. The requirement to maintain our PUP numbers continues until at least 31 March 2024. Alongside this short term requirement to maintain officer numbers the Home Office is very clear about the continued need to identify and deliver efficiency and productivity savings.

As PCC, one of my areas of focus in scrutinising the Force review will be maintaining the resources for local policing.]

(9) The saving of £250,000 on collaborative initiatives is welcome, however, after this year there are no planned savings in the budget. Collaborations between forces, other "Blue Light" services and local authorities are an efficient and more economical way of working so will TVP be carrying out further work in this area?

[TVP is actively engaged in collaborative activities bi-laterally, regionally and nationally these activities will continue and where new opportunities present themselves these will be considered and adopted where beneficial. Frequently the benefits of collaboration are in sustainability of service provision or cost avoidance. Where these activities identify cashable savings they will be included in future years of the productivity strategy. The £250,000 saving reflects the savings on licenses within the collaborative ICT function.]

Members' Questions

- (1) How does the proposed increase in the Police precept of Council Tax translate into front line neighbourhood policing?

[The PCC replied that generally there was a difference in residents' attitude to an increase in the Police precept to local authorities raising the Council Tax as the sum was a small increase. There was a commitment for 80 officers to enable additional resource to be put into the community.]

- (2) The PCC was thanked for the clarity of what the additional £15 (Band D) was funding in his written answers to questions. However, there was a risk to assumptions. What engagement did the PCC have before the budget as there was now an additional financial burden with the required vetting of existing staff?

[The PCC replied that the work on the preparation for the budget began at the back end of the summer between himself and the Chief Finance Officer. In November/December the pace quickened with internal scrutiny and national comparisons taking place to see what other Forces were proposing. Assumptions were shared. The inflation forecast was based on the Bank of England's assumption. Prudence has to take place because of the impact on Council Taxpayers. Energy prices were built into contracts.]

The PCC acknowledged that in relation to vetting, this was potentially an added burden and would involve checking all existing Force officers against the Police database. This would be an automated robotic task which the PCC understood would be carried out by a national body, therefore it was envisaged that this would not be a significant financial burden.]

- (3) The £249,000 in the budget to prevent violence against women and girls is welcomed. Could the PCC provide some detail on what these measures will be?

[The funding was for a variety of things with part towards a continuation of work which was already taking place and would continue. Funding would be provided for support of teams policing against rape and assault to enable investigations to be brought forward in more timely fashion.]

- (4) Reference was made to the property expenditure for Atlantic House which had seen an increase of 50% because of a contractor going into liquidation and the PCC was asked for an explanation for this.

[The PCC reported that the previous contractor for Atlantic House had gone into receivership. There had been no financial loss to TVP and the procurement process for a new contractor was fine. However, the tender process two years later, saw the cost-of-living crisis, with rising inflation, energy costs which caused the additional costs for the project.]

- (5) The PCC was asked about the proposal to decrease Local Police Areas from 11 to 5, and the impact this would have on neighbourhood policing.

[The PCC replied that the Force review presented an opportunity to review community policing, the whole of TVP estate etc. Domestic Abuse Teams would be formed with Police Officers available to be mobilised on demand.]

In response to a question whether the reduction of LPAs was driven by costs, the PCC replied that it was not. It created an opportunity in the future and discussions would take place with the new Chief Constable when he was in post. There were no concerns from the Police Federation in relation to the service review.]

(6) £600,000 has been included in the budget for Citizens in Policing. Could the PCC provide some detail on the Citizens in Policing scheme?

[The Panel was informed that this related to volunteers who supported TVP training and more widely, around Special Constables which amounted to around 10% of the Force (5,000). The volunteers may not be paid, however, there were still costs associated with the role such as vehicles, training and equipment. TVP was looking to have a central core of volunteers with specialised roles.]

(7) The PCC was asked about the spend for Investment and Upgrade to CCTV Services throughout the Thames Valley area.

[The PCC informed the Panel that funding was being put aside in the capital programme for the Thames Valley wide partnership for CCTV. This was an ambitious programme which would require the participation and finance support from local authorities. The proposal was for 3 or 4 control rooms in Thames Valley with Police staff. There were benefits bringing CCTV within control of TVP but there were costs associated with it.]

Reference was made to discussions which had been taking place with Slough Borough Council about moving control of CCTV to TVP and Milton Keynes Council because of financial problems.

The PCC reported that Reading Borough Council used CCTV network heavily, particularly with traffic management and discussions would have to take place on how the proposed operation of CCTV would impact Reading.

The representative from Slough Borough Council asked that the PCC consider the plight which the Council found itself in, particularly as TVP's use of CCTV was important. The PCC replied that it was a wider ambition for TVP to monitor and hold CCTV, but there needed to be contributions from local authorities.

Slough were planning on turning off their CCTV in April 2023 and it was the PCC's plan to transfer Slough to the Milton Keynes control room in January 2024.

The PCC said that this was challenging financial position for Slough, but they should not turn off their CCTV as this would be a risk. CCTV should be a priority and other alternatives should be sought and perhaps the PCC Community Safety funding could be used for CCTV.

In response to a point made about the importance of local knowledge for CCTV control rooms, the PCC assured the Panel that control room personnel would build up that knowledge. The local knowledge has been built up by the control room which covers the Oxfordshire County wide CCTV service.]

(8) A risk outlined in the budget is productivity savings of £20m, which includes a high proportion from the proposed force review. What implications will there be on local communities in terms of neighbourhood policing?

[The PCC reported that £20 million of productivity savings were having to be found and it was a risk. The situation was not helped by the vacancy situation. The issue was not just about productivity savings, but savings generally. In relation to the service review there were no savings in the final year. This provided flexibility. Other savings would ease pressure on the £20 million productivity savings.]

Reference was made to the National Police Air Service and the increasing use of drones which drove costs up which had to be factored into the budget.

The PCC referred to having the ability to use reserves over 4 years. Energy savings would have to be made and reference was made to Atlantic House which would be made more energy efficient.]

(9) The residents wanted to see front line Police on the streets and the PCC was asked how this was to be achieved.

[The PCC replied that the allocation of officers to their policing roles was an operational decision of the Chief Constable, however, he was committed to increase community policing.]

(10) The MTFP included £15.2m savings out of the £20m total productivity savings coming from the Force Review, The PCC was asked for his assurance that this was realistic.

[The PCC reiterated that the Police Federation had expressed no concerns at the Force Review. There were no firm proposals and as already stated, these decisions were operational decisions made by the Chief Constable. There were no firm proposals at this stage which could be scrutinised on an item basis.]

(11) The proposed £15 increase in the Police precept added further to the cost of living increases for residents which made their lives more financially difficult. Had there been any push back to the Government from the PCC about this?

[The PCC replied that lobbying had taken place prior to the settlement and the final settlement had been more generous than expected. There was a good argument that Thames Valley should receive better funding per head of population.]

A Member commented that in the last six years, the Police precept of Council Tax has increased by £86. Council Tax is a regressive tax and there should be more pressure put on the Government about providing more police funding rather than using more Council Tax to subsidise the shortfall in funding.]

RESOLVED – (1) That the Police and Crime Panel approve the Police and Crime Commissioner’s precept for 2023/24, to increase the Council Tax precept by £15 (Band D), as set out in the OPCC report ‘Four Year Medium Term Capital Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27’.

(2) That the Panel received the PCC’s proposed precept for 2023/24 and noted:

- (i) That, subject to final taxbase notifications, the council tax requirement for 2023/24 be set at £245,160,938.**
- (ii) That any variation in the final amount of council tax income be appropriated to or from the Improvement & Performance Reserve.**
- (iii) The revenue estimates for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1.**
- (iv) That the police element of the council tax for 2023/24 be set at £256.28 for properties in Band D, with the charge for other bands as set out in Table 1, for comparison appendix 2 shows the comparison band D precept across all forces.**

Property Band	Relevant Proportion	PCC Element of the Council Tax £
A	6/9	170.85
B	7/9	199.33
C	8/9	227.80
D	9/9	256.28
E	11/9	313.23
F	13/9	370.18
G	15/9	427.13
H	18/9	512.56

REPORT OF THE BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP

As in previous years, the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel formed a Budget Task & Finish Group to assist in discharging its statutory duty to scrutinise the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Thames Valley’s proposed Council Tax precept for 2023/24.

Councillor Simon Rouse, the Chairman of the Budget Task and Finish Group presented the report. He thanked Martin Thornley, Chief Finance Officer, Office of PCC and Linda Waters, Director of Finance, TVP for attending the Task and Finish Group which met on 19 January 2023 and updating Members on the PCC’s draft budget proposals.

Reference was made to the concerns expressed by the Budget Task and Finish Group at the lateness of receiving the budget reports which gave Members little time to scrutinise the budget proposals. A statutory responsibility of the PCP is to scrutinise the Police Precept and Members asked that in future the PCC ensures that the Budget Task and Finish Group be given sufficient time to ensure effective scrutiny takes place.

The Panel was informed that the Budget Task and Finish Group had been assured from the scrutiny of the proposals that due to the challenging economic climate with high inflation, rising energy and fuel costs, that the PCC request for a £15 increase in the Police precept for 2023/24 was reasonable.

The recommendation of the Budget Task and Finish Group was to approve the Police and Crime Commissioner's precept for 2023/24, to increase the Council Tax precept by £15 (Band D), as set out in the OPCC report 'Four Year Medium Term Capital Plan 2022/23 to 2026/27'.

51/23

PROGRESS ON CONTACT MANAGEMENT

The PCC provided the Panel with a report which provided details of progress made in relation to improvements to the Contact Management platform.

Reference was made to the CM101 programme in collaboration with Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Constabulary which had been approved to improve working practices and performance.

The Panel was informed that to meet current 999 and 101 targets, an extra 195 staff on top of the agreed establishment for the department was required at an additional £6.8 million which was not a viable option. The programme had identified a range of process improvements and new technologies, such as Robotic Process Automation, which alongside a significantly smaller staff uplift, could improve demand management and help achieve 101 average speed to answer times of less than 4 minutes. These improvements over the next 21 months would be at a cost of £1.5 million.

Members' Questions

(1) Reference was made to the data which showed that there were 24% of calls to 101 which were answered over 10 minutes. The PCC was asked whether there was data on those waiting longer than 10 minutes?

[The PCC replied that usually callers would abandon their calls where options were provided, and these were usually reported on-line. It was acknowledged by the Panel that there were over 71,000 on-line reports.]

(2) The PCC was asked whether the extra recruitment included officers to Contact Management?

[The PCC reported that generally the recruitment was for other police areas as Robotic Process Automation would replace the need for extra staff. However, there would always be recruitment to Contact Management due to the challenges on retention of staff. This was an issue for all organisations.]

The report of the PCC was noted.

ARREST DATA BY ETHNICITY, INCLUDING STOP AND SEARCH AND THE POLICE RACE ACTION PLAN

The Panel was provided with a report which showed TVP's arrest data by ethnicity. The report also included information on stop and search, and progress made on the Police Race Action Plan.

The Chair of the Panel thanked Chief Superintendent Sarah Grahame, Superintendent James Hahn and DCI Quoc Vo for providing a detailed and excellent report.

The PCC reported that the report sets out a complex picture with a changing landscape. There were many scrutiny bodies which included community groups that looked at this data.

In response to a comment from a Panel Member, the PCC reported that this report did not specify about gender. The data provided for the report was on ethnicity and was on all genders.

Members' Questions

(1) The PCC was asked whether there was any data on who victims identified as perpetrators of crimes and motivated stop and searches?

[The PCC commented that he understood the point being made. The data does not necessarily show for example, repeat stop and searches. Reference was made to policing during the period of covid restrictions, where data had been skewed by repeat offenders. There was a challenge of how to record these incidents. The Pronto app which officers used made it easier, however, it was acknowledged that the raw numbers may not show the reality.]

Communities needed to be reassured over the disproportionate arrests and stop and searches of certain ethnicities, which sometimes depended upon the environment, for example, the night time economy where there were younger people and a mix of races, which was disproportionate to the population of an area.]

(2) Reference was made to the governance alignment between the Race Action Plan and the legitimacy board, and the PCC was asked what the consequence was of not having that and what would be benefits be. In addition, in relation to stop and search, 88.3% were based on reasonable grounds, however that meant that there were around 1500 that did not have reasonable grounds. The PCC was asked whether this figure was disproportionate and whether there was data on ethnicity on these.

[The PCC replied that he would have to check if there was such data on whether there was ethnicity data on the 1500 incidents where there had not been reasonable grounds to stop and search. There was a requirement to record these, and it was about not recording, rather than not having grounds.]

Regarding alignment, it was about not being distracted by other activities. There will be national measures which will be imposed on policing, which TVP will need to do. It was important to be aligned nationally but attempting to drive that national picture.]

- (3) Some of the work and recommendations are recent. The point was noted that there was disproportionate data in urban areas for example. The PCC was asked to come back to the Panel in a year's time to look at the impact of some of the actions being taken such as the setting up of Board set up, in a years' time, have something back, follow up to look at impact of these actions.

[The PCC said, subject to the Panel's work programme, he would report back. The Boards would have to carry out work to assess.]

- (4) A Member made a general comment regarding systemic racism which existed in organisations, different ethnic propensities to going to prison, different motivations for reporting, the possibility of investigating more crimes if reported by white people, interpretation of behaviours and those crimes may be reported more, if there was a reasonable reason for arrest. The data was not good, and the Police needed to look at what was influencing stop and searches.

[The PCC replied that TVP is not systemic racist, although he acknowledged that the comment made was a general one. The stop and search data for TVP was good compared to other forces and he had not seen any data which suggested TVP investigated more crimes reported by white people.]

- (5) The PCC was congratulated for TVP being an Icebreaker force for the National Race Action Plan and being Race Equality Matters Trailblazer. The PCC was asked to bring back regular progress reports on the improvements and progress made with the impact of these.

Reference was made to the composition of the Panel, which was mainly white, male and middle aged, with only one Member from a BAME community. The Panel had a duty to be a critical friend to the process and to acknowledge that systemic racism affected all agencies. Could the PCC provide information on how would the independent scrutiny and oversight board be formulated and how was he getting out to all communities to enable them to understand that he was taking this issue seriously and aiming to reduce this disproportionality in relation to arrests and stop and search?

[The PCC said he did not have details of the membership or terms of reference of the ISOP as it was an independent body, and they would decide on this. The PCC can update on this when the decisions have been made.]

In terms of communication on recruitment, there was a positive engagement team made up of representatives from the BAME community and contact was made with individual community groups. During the Black Lives Matters protests, TVP engaged with communities and tried to recruit some individuals to take part in some of this work. Community scrutiny panels will be asked to participate and help the police to reach out.]

(6) The PCC was asked if there was any data which proved that stop and search worked.

[The PCC said that stop and search was a valuable tool and generally had widespread public support. Stop and search was predominantly used for weapons and drugs and its purpose was to prevent criminality, particularly around the use of weapons such as knives. There was no way of knowing whether a crime was to be committed but it was a preventative measure.]

A Panel Member referred to the statistic which indicated that a black person in Thames Valley was four and a half times more likely to be arrested and it was important that an analysis take place on why this was happening and that there should be no complacency on this. Reference was also made to the investigations of crimes and the PCC commented that there was no evidence that some black crimes were not investigated.

RESOLVED – That the report and the information provided by the PCC be noted and an update report be submitted to a future Panel meeting.

53/23

UNAUTHORISED ENCAMPMENTS

The PCC provided a report which contained a briefing on Force and LPA Unauthorised Encampment Performance data, training, and the response to Unauthorised Encampments (UE) in Thames Valley Police. The report also contained an overview of how TVP were working with Local Authorities in the Thames Valley to provide a consistent response to Unauthorised Encampments.

The PCC informed the Panel that the issue of concern was the initial assessment made by the Force at an early stage on encampments.

Members' Questions

(1) In 2022, there were 386 reported unauthorised encampments and of those, there were only 16 Section 61s used. What was the status of those other reports?

[The PCC reported that the data did not show when local authorities and landowners took their own action, or the travellers moved on their own accord. Section 61 is only used when proportionate action is required.]

(2) A Member referred to the solution of unauthorised encampments which was finding sites and asked why this was being reported to the Panel.]

[The PCC replied that unauthorised encampments had been in the Panel's work programme since Tackling Illegal Encampments was included as one of his priorities in his Police and Criminal Justice Plan.

In response to a query regarding the difference between illegal and unauthorised encampments, the PCC replied that it was semantics, as any encampment was a civil breach and if the encampment was unauthorised, it was illegal.]

- (3) Reading accounted for 50% of Section 60s used, with the Council working with other Councils in looking to create spaces and sites for permanency. There was planning approval for a temporary site. The PCC was asked where was the tipping point for issuing Section 60s?

[The PCC replied that the challenge was what was classed as significant, which could vary. Officers were allowed to make reasonable judgements which created a challenge around managing expectations. The Force's use of these powers was used proportionally and appropriately. Training for Inspectors required strengthening.]

- (4) A joint working protocol in relation to unauthorised encampments was established between TVP and local authorities in 2018 but has been updated after a series of consultations. Could the PCC provide the Panel with a copy of this?

[The PCC reported that the protocol provided clarity on responsibilities on the process and agreed to circulate the updated protocol.]

- (5) The PCC was asked to reappraise the priorities in his Police and Criminal Justice Plan in view of the higher crimes of violence against women and girls and domestic abuse, compared to the number of unauthorised encampments.

[The PCC reported that there was a huge amount of work being carried out in relation to violence against women and girls and domestic abuse and there was a strong emphasis through his Police and Criminal Justice Plan. The tackling of illegal encampments caused concern for residents and was not a major priority as such but was an issue that many residents wanted tackling. It did not take much resource.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC and the information report be noted and the updated joint working protocol in relation to unauthorised encampments be circulated to Panel Members.

54/23 **RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBER TO THE PANEL**

The Panel was asked to agree that the one vacant position for an Independent Co-Opted Member be advertised on each of the Panel's Constituent Authorities' websites.

It was agreed that the shortlisting and interview Panel consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel, Councillor Robin Bradburn, Councillor Simon Rouse and Councillor Karen Rowland.

55/23 **REPORT OF THE COMPLAINTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Panel received a report from the Complaints Sub-Committee on a recent complaint which was upheld against the PCC.

56/23 **UPDATES FROM CHAIR OF THE PANEL AND PCC AND TOPICAL ISSUES REPORT**

Vetting of officers

In response to a question regarding the recent announcement on vetting in Police forces, the PCC informed the Panel that the vetting would consist of rechecking all officers, not just new recruits.

Confirmation Hearings

A Member of the Panel raised the issue of the failure of the Panel to hold Confirmation Hearings for the PCC appointed Chief of Staff and Chief Finance Officer and the advice he had received from the Home Office. The PCC replied that he had given the PCP the required three weeks' notice for each appointment as required under legislation, however, due to the failure of the PCP to appoint a Chair at its annual meeting, the PCP was unable to confirm the appointments.

Resignation of Police Officers in TVP

The PCC was asked what affect the resignation in the last 12 months of the 160 new Police Officer recruits had on recruitment targets in TVP. In response the PCC replied that TVP was on track to meet targets, although there were challenges. There were always Police Officers who left early in their career as they realised that a career in the Police was not for everyone.

Reference was made to measures to retain staff which included providing flexibility for women or enabling the taking of sabbaticals. The PCC agreed with this.

The Panel noted the topical issues report.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted the work programme and agreed that the item for the next meeting on the **PCC's Case Management system** be referred to the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing