

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday 23 June 2023 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.10 pm.

Members present

Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council) (Chair), Councillor Peter Brazier (Buckinghamshire Council - co-optee), Councillor Phil Chapman (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Peter Gammond (Co-Opted Independent Member), Councillor Kandy Jefferies (Bracknell Forest Council), Pamela Mackenzie-Reilly (Co-opted Independent Member), Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes Council - co-optee), Councillor Stephen Newton (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Vicky Poole (West Berkshire Council), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) (Vice-Chair), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Mabu Shaik (Slough Borough Council), and Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council)

Substitute Members in attendance

Councillor Richard Newcombe (Buckinghamshire Council (for Cllr Carroll)), Cllr Ajaz Rehman (Oxford City Council (for Cllr Aziz)) and Councillor Andrew Tinsley (South Oxfordshire District Council (for Cllr Casey-Rerhaye)).

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner) and Jason Hogg (Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police) (Part of the meeting).

Agenda Item

1 Election of Chair for 2023/24

Members of the Panel were asked for nominations for the Chair of the Panel for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Both Councillors Robin Bradburn and Keith McLean were nominated and seconded to be appointed as Chair of the Panel for 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Upon being put to the vote, Councillor Robin Bradburn was appointed as Chair of the Panel for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Councillor Robin Bradburn took the Chair.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2023/24

Members of the Panel were asked for nominations for the Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Councillor Karen Rowland was nominated and seconded to be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Panel for 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Councillor Karen Rowland was appointed Vice-Chair of the Panel for 2023/24 Municipal Year.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Shaista Aziz (Oxford City Council) (Councillor Ajaz Rehman substituting), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council) (Cllr Richard Newcombe substituting), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Co-Opted, Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council (Councillor Andrew Tinsley substituting) and Councillor Simon Rouse (Co-Opted, Buckinghamshire Council) .

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 24 March 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

5 Appointment of Independent Co-Opted Member of the Panel

The Panel was informed that on 28 March 2023, interviews took place for the vacant Independent Co-Opted Member of the Panel and Pamela Mackenzie – Reilly was the successful candidate.

The Panel confirmed the appointment of Pamela Mackenzie – Reilly as an Independent Co-Opted Member of the Panel.

6 Police and Crime Commissioner's Annual Report 2022/23

Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Police and Crime Commissioner was required to produce and publish an Annual Report which summarised the exercise of the PCC's functions in each financial year and the progress which had been made in the financial year in meeting the objectives contained in the PCC's Police and Criminal Justice Plan.

The PCC reported that the report provided progress made in meeting the five priority areas detailed in his Police and Criminal Justice Plan 2021-25.

Members' Questions

(1) The revised national strategic policing requirement include the home secretary's biggest threats to public safety, and they must be given due regard to by PCCs in

their Police and Crime Plans. Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has been added as a national threat. Will the PCC now consider amending his police and crime plan to include Violence against Women and Girls as one of his named key objectives, rather than it being hidden within the report?

[The PCC argued that the work which he and Thames Valley Police did on Violence against Women and Girls was a priority which was reflected throughout the Police and Criminal Justice Plan. Pursuing VAWG offenders and bringing them to justice was a priority.]

The PCC referred to the work which had been carried out around the nighttime economy such as Project Vigilant. This was a Thames Valley flagship initiative that used a combination of uniformed and plain clothed officers to carry out patrols in areas outside night clubs, bars and pubs, to identify people who may be displaying signs of predatory behaviour, such as sexual harassment, inappropriate touching and loitering.

TVP has an operational VAWG Strategy, and the PCC chaired the VAWG Strategic Partnership Board which brought in partners from local authorities, Health partners, charities, students etc.

There was further detail in priority four, improving the criminal justice system such as the progression of cases in this area. This was a question of semantics, and the PCC did not recall the Panel asking him why he was not doing particular actions to prevent VAWG.

The PCC referred to the recent national strategic policing requirement of VAWG and commented that this also included violence against males which highlighted the semantics. The PCC said he was committed to supporting victims of crime in the Thames Valley and if the Panel was unhappy at the actions which were taken he would be happy to take this away and have a look at the strategy.

Funding had been received from the Home Office and Project Vigilant directly supported the PCC's Police and Criminal Justice Plan by focusing on prevention and targeting the perpetrators of crime.]

The Member appreciated the work which had been carried out on the nighttime economy in Reading but stressed that VAWAG was hidden in the Plan.

(2) A Member referred to local policing being about residents seeing police on the ground and in his ward, there were two police officers and three police community support officers. There was also police representation at parish meetings which was welcomed. However, one of the police officers was regularly taken away which impacted on police coverage. The PCC was asked for his plans to deal with this.

[The PCC replied that one of the challenges under the Uplift Programme under the

new framework was that TVP had a young workforce. Under the Police education framework, new recruits received protected learning time which meant they were not doing policing. Neighbourhood officers were taken away to cover responses. In October last year 65 – 70 % of officers were being extracted which did cause considerable disruption. This year this was down to 35% and would be further reduced to 20%. There would always be significant incidents which required police coverage such as at Royal Ascot for example.

The PCC would provide an update on the proposed increase of neighbourhood policing at a future meeting.] ACTION: PCC

(3) The PCC was asked about the increase in formal action on domestic abuse which was detailed in the report and was asked, what was defined as formal action?

[The PCC replied that there has been a significant increase in cases of domestic abuse. Formal action could be some form of out of court disposal or it could be dealt with by another authority. It was all the prosecutions, cautions and court disposals. Nationally, there was nowhere enough done on low level domestic abuse. There was a scrutiny process in place regarding the use of these actions. There were times where not prosecuting was the right action, dependent on the nature of the situation, but there had to be enough evidence to get an out of court disposal.

There was the opportunity to use domestic abuse prevention orders, but these needed to be used appropriately and there was a review process in place. Domestic abuse was often a complex area and the PCC suggested that the Panel add domestic abuse to its work programme to enable effective scrutiny on this area.] ACTION: PCP

(4) The PCC was asked for an update on the work of Community Speedwatch and referred to the 238 groups and asked whether this would increase?

[The PCC reported that initially there were two or three groups in each county, but groups were now all over Thames Valley with more volunteers to be recruited. There was equipment available for new volunteers which included the speed guns, where previously the cost was prohibitive for parish councils to fund. The 'new style' Community Speedwatch scheme enabled the effective communication between groups and the police. As a result, the police were in a better position to target persistent offenders and hotspot locations, which aimed to reduce the number of people speeding on roads and potentially saving lives. The PCC reported that he was pleased to see there was a growing number of groups joining the scheme.

Reference was made to Dorset Police, who had dedicated camera operators who were Police Staff working alongside Community Speed Watch groups. When a camera operator was in attendance, this would result in Notice of Intended Prosecution notices being issued to vehicles detected speeding instead of an advisory letter. This would be looked at so there could be a combination of enforcement and education.

The PCC said that discussions were taking place with the Chief Constable of where Community Speedwatch should sit in the Force as it was currently part of Roads Policing.]

- (5) The PCC was asked about fraud, particularly internet fraud which caused misery to people. Reference was made to the central fraud unit with 36 officers which was welcomed. The PCC was asked about the co-operation which took place with local authorities on prevention and raising awareness and for his view on the effectiveness of Action Fraud.

[The PCC replied that he was not aware of any barriers of working with local authorities on fraud prevention, with the bulk of the interactions being with Trade Standards Teams. The Police had problems with dealing with fraud which ranged from high level internet fraud through to old-fashioned distraction fraud such as snatching bank cards or cash from a cash machine without the person realising.

Regarding Action Fraud, the PCC reported that the service was not good. The service was a repository service with most reported frauds not investigated. TVP received those cases where there was a possibility of investigation. Discussions had taken place with TVP's central fraud unit on whether TVP should receive more cases from Action Fraud to investigate and help victims of fraud.

Nationally, fraud was not dealt with well and the scale of fraud was huge.]

- (6) A Member re-iterated the call for Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) to be a strategic priority in the PCC's Police and Criminal Justice Plan. Reference was made to a meeting he had attended with TVP, where it was stressed that VAWG was a priority for the Police, but not having it as a PCC strategic priority was a serious omission and created an impression that it was not a major priority for the PCC.

[The PCC replied that his Police and Criminal Justice Plan had VAWG initiatives all through the document and they were all priorities. VAWG was a priority for him. There had been no members of TVP who had asked about initiatives he had in place to prevent VAWG.]

- (7) Reference was made to neighbourhood policing in Slough, where crime was increasing. The PCC was asked for details of the plans to increase manpower to bring crime down in Slough.

[The PCC replied that the numbers of police officers would double. Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) needed recruiting and PCSOs appointed needed to be looked at, to ensure there was retention as many PCSOs moved to a career as a Police Officer. There had been an issue with neighbourhood policing and the PCC referred to the loss PCSOs which had impacted on neighbourhood policing.

There were 11 PCSOs across Slough and visibility was important, particularly in

neighbourhoods. The PCC said he was interested at the work carried out around violent crime hotspots. Slough did have a problem of violent crime and there were areas which could be pinpointed as hotspots.

Regular patrols took place in hotspots, with officers doing regular 15-minute patrols on foot which was a deterrent. Technology tracked where these crimes may be displaced too. E bikes were being looked at to ensure police officers could be in the right places at the right time.]

(8) The PCC was asked about police numbers and referred to a paper in the House of Commons library which was published in December 2022 on police service strength. TVP was ranked 32 out of the 42 of Police forces in England Wales, in terms of number of police officers per 100,000 of residents. The PCC was asked whether this meant that TVP was more efficient, that there was less crime or was it TVP was not able to respond quickly. Visibility and response times were important to residents and having more police officers would improve visibility and response times. The PCC was asked for his views on this.

[With regard to officer numbers, in December 2022, the PCC recalled that there had been a slight dip, due to the number of resignations. He had not seen the comparative numbers which were referred to. TVP would like more officers, but they now had more than they had before.

The PCC said that he did not know what the number of police officers to residents should be. The PCC reported that he was keen on the funding formula review to enable TVP to have more officers compared to other forces.

Reference was made to the need to take to consider all factors when considering funding to forces, and reference was made to Thames Valley having a number of prisons where crimes in prisons were high, which had to be dealt with by TVP.]

(9) The PCC was asked about whether steps were being taken to reduce capital costs of TVP (solar panels, electric vehicles etc).

[The PCC replied that there were green initiatives being looked at to reduce energy costs. Over £4m utility costs for this year which was significant. In relation to electric vehicles, TVP hosted the Chiltern Transport Consortium which procured vehicles for forces who were part of the Consortium. British Transport Police have purchased Teslas, however, there were logistical and performance challenges around this for the Police such as managing charging points and the limitations of electric cars being used as pursuit vehicles. However, petrol and diesel cars would not be produced in the future and these challenges needed to be worked through in the future.

There was work being carried out with parts of the fleet such as unmarked police cars, pool cars who were using electric vehicles as a trial to work through some of the policies and principles around using electric vehicles in policing.]

- (10) The PCC was asked at how could we make women feel secure if VAWG was not one of the PCC's strategic priorities. Including VAWG as a priority would improve its visibility and improve the perception that making women feel secure and safe was a priority.

[The PCC replied that there was a budget of around £600,000 for domestic abuse/VAWG. There was lots of detail in the Plan on initiatives to combat VAWG which the Chief Constable considered a priority. Adding VAWG as a strategic priority would not make women feel any safer. A new superintendent role had been created for both domestic abuse cases and rape.]

The PCC said if he was to revise his plan and put VAWG in as one of his main priorities, nothing different would be done. Reference was made to Project Vigilance which started in Oxford and involved undercover officers spotting evasive or aggressive behaviour near to night clubs or approaching groups of women. This had been successful in terms of catching people, but it also offered reassurance to women.

The PCC referred to the work carried out with a former Love Island TV star who had worked with TVP to promote the initiative to younger women. There was lots of promotional work carried out with posters in toilets in clubs making women aware of the issues. This type of work was more valuable to women than including VAWG as a priority in his Police and Criminal Justice Plan.]

The PCC was praised for the work which had been carried out in relation to VAWG, particularly around the nighttime economy.

- (11) Thames Valley comprised of three large counties, with various demographics. There were big towns in rural areas, large City Councils and towns such as Reading, and Slough. Rural areas were very different to conurbation areas and an issue with rural communities such as in Burghfield and Mortimer in West Berkshire was the presence of travellers on traveller sites and in illegal encampments. Each local authority had a different focus on the PCC's main priorities in the Police and Criminal Justice Plan and Members were here to represent the priorities of the local authority they represented.

The PCC was asked how Members should work with TVP to ensure their priorities are met and were there were resource issues as Ministry of Defence (MOD) armed officers had been drafted in to help TVP on issues such as the risk of a person taking their own life. The PCC was asked about the resource and structure issues for this to occur.

[The PCC replied that local authorities linked in with the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). CSPs were linked into the police, with often police officers chairing these and officers in the PCC office providing support to CSPs in terms of analysis etc.]

Local Police Commanders were available for local Councillors to speak to. Civil Nuclear Constabulary and MOD were in effect police officers and their resource was sometimes called upon. This was jointly welcomed and improved their expertise and was a useful resource in local areas.

In response to the point raised regarding fear for welfare, the PCC said that a TVP response could also involve deploying an armed response, dependent on who was available in the area to respond. The PCC said if there were concerns regarding armed officers turning up in fear for safety cases, he would have a discussion with the Chief Constable.]

- (12) Reference was made to some of the achievements of the Rural Crime Taskforce which had been listed in the PCC report such as on the theft of machinery and tools. In West Oxfordshire there had been a spate of burglaries from people's sheds and garages and cars stolen from people's drives. The PCC was asked whether the programme could be extended to include such crimes and to could prevention advice be given by the Police at parish meetings.

[The PCC replied that at the moment the levels of burglary were lower, but he acknowledged that burglary was a hugely impactful crime. There has been lots of good work taken place to prevent it, and contrary to national reports, TVP's policy was to attend all burglaries. There were challenges in the clear up rate for burglaries, usually due to lack of evidence but the strengthening of neighbourhood policing would enable the Police to be more proactive.

Victims First team was looking at the kind of support which could be given around crime prevention as part of the PCC's Crimefighter's Strategy.

Regarding communication with parish councils, this was very important. Perception really mattered as PCSOs turning up to a parish meeting would not impact on burglaries, but it would offer reassurance to residents. There should be standardised communications such as newsletters going out to parish councils and resident groups as a matter of course.]

- (13) The PCC was asked about the Road Safety Strategy and when would it be available?

[The PCC reported that he had seen a draft and the intention was to consult with partners who had attended the Road Safety summit before releasing the document.]

- (14) The PCC was asked for his collaborative strategy on County Lines, particularly as the "bloodlines" run through British Transport Police.

[The PCC reported that a lot of work was carried out around County Lines and drugs, and he would be happy to come back to the Panel on the work being done on this.

ACTION: PCC

The collaboration on this was carried out through the South East Regional Organised Crime Group, which TVP hosted. There was a national County Lines Co-ordination Centre which managed the issue nationally.

There were successes in this area after working with British Transport Police.]

(15) In relation to the priority of tackling illegal encampments, the PCC was asked for an update on the data provided in the annual report?

[The PCC reported that he was aware of the number of encampments in Milton Keynes and commented that these encampments did not just affect rural areas. There have been some successes in relation to this priority, however, eradicating the problem would require local authorities to provide sites for travellers so that they did not camp illegally. The provision of sites was not within the remit of the PCC, but policing was. Processes have been put in place and there was new legislation.

The Panel was informed that there had been an improvement with the inclusion of encampments on the Force's daily management team meeting to enable awareness of potential problems. There needed to be some improvement on the judgements made on the ground to identify those encampments which may result in significant disruption and challenge to TVP.]

(16) The PCC was asked about the SE regional units and the extraction of TVP officers into these units which took officers away from front line policing.

[The PCC agreed that the units were increasing, but they were increasing mainly because of their own recruitment. TVP officers would be replaced if they joined the units permanently.]

The Chair thanked the PCC for the report and requested that there be a minor cosmetic change to the report in the future; producing the report in portrait rather than landscape.

The Chair also asked that in future, if possible, the report should contain more data/statistics with comparative data (number of police officers to residents, funding for Durham compared to TVP for example).

The Chair questioned the PCC's comment that TVP now had more police officers than in 2010 and said the report should have provided figures to enable comparisons to be made.

In relation to the data provided on list of offences, the Chair said that it would have been helpful if these figures were broken down in more detail. In response the PCC said that the data replicated the national approach to the information provided but he would take these suggestions away, although comparisons with other forces should not be in his annual report.

Reference was made to the section on court delays and the Chair asked if the PCC could use his support in Milton Keynes City Council's campaign for a Crown Court in the City, which would help the criminal justice system and reduce court delays. The PCC said he would look at this.

The Chair reiterated the comments made by other Panel Members that VAWG should be one of the five priorities in the PCC's Police and Criminal Justice Plan and that as the objective of Tackling Illegal Encampments was being met, that it should replace this. The PCC noted the comment made.

The PCC commented that there were still some local authorities who had not returned the Protocol between TVP and local authorities in tackling illegal encampments. The local authorities were: - Milton Keynes City Council, Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and West Oxfordshire Council and the PCC was awaiting their responses.

RESOLVED - That the annual report of the PCC be noted, and a letter be sent to the Office for the PCC in accordance with Section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 detailing the review the Panel carried out in relation to the PCC's Annual Report 2022/23.

7 Central Vetting Unit

At a previous Panel meeting, Members asked for an update on police vetting when in January 2023, the Home Office announced that all police forces must check their workforce against national databases to mitigate against the risk of important information on an individual being missed on their employment.

The PCC provided a report which outlined the current central vetting unit, highlighting structural change, current work streams, current risks, and horizon planning.

Members' Questions

- (1) In the report, reference is made to the current backlog having a 19-week delay which would be cleared by 6 March 2023. The PCC was asked for clarification on this as the date had elapsed.

[The PCC replied that this meant that there would be no applications no older than 6 March 2023.]

- (2) The incompatibility of the two IT systems was worrying, the PCC was asked whether there were any issues with anything slipping through the net.

[The PCC replied that this was an area for improvement, which the HMIC had identified. Members of the Panel would be aware of some of the challenges TVP had had in the past of some of the HR and IT systems and procurement. The reassurance around this was that it was included in the scope, and this was borne in

mind. There was no significant risk. There was a big space for automation beyond the TVP HR system. With regard to the historical data, everybody was vetted and put through the Police national data base so that nothing was missed.

This was a big operation which also included manual checks. The PCC asked the question, whether they could automate, potentially through robotic automation, and that this be done regularly. The Home Office may be concerned at individual Forces doing their own automated regular checks at the risk of crashing the whole system.

The National Law Enforcement Data programme would be replacing the Police National Computer and the PCC hoped this would allow automated data checks.]

(3) The PCC was asked about the different types of backlogs and particularly contractors. Does the delay in vetting contractors' impact on TVP's business?

[The PCC replied that this was a challenge, but that priority was given to those contractors that needed vetting quickly for urgent works. The reason for the 116 of contractors required vetting was because it was the start of the financial year.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC be noted.

8 Review of Panel Rules of Procedure, Complaints Procedure, Panel Membership and appointment to Sub-Committee and Task Group

The Panel was provided with a report which included updated Rules of Procedure and Panel Arrangements, details of the Complaints Procedure, required appointments to the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee and Budget Task and Finish Group and details of the Home Office grant for 2022/23.

The newly appointed Chair of the Panel reported that he would have discussions with Milton Keynes City Council on the future hosting arrangements for the Panel and report back to the next Panel meeting. **ACTION: CHAIR**

On the appointments to the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee and Budget Task and Finish Group it was agreed that the Chair of the Panel, in consultation with the Scrutiny Officer be given delegated authority to fill any vacancy. After the meeting a vacancy on the Complaints Sub-committee was filled.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Rules of Procedure and Panel Arrangements, as amended, for the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel be approved.

(2) That, the Chair of the Panel discusses the hosting arrangements of the Panel with his local authority and report back to the next meeting of the Panel

(3) That the Panel reconfirms the decision that future meetings of the Panel continue to take place at Buckinghamshire Council's Gateway House in Aylesbury.

(4) That the appointments to the Panel's Complaints Sub Committee and Budget

Task and Finish Group be as follows:

Complaints Sub-Committee

Cllr Robin Bradburn, Cllr Peter Brazier, Cllr David Carroll, Cllr Emily Culverhouse, Mr Peter Gammond, Cllr Karen Rowland and Cllr Richard Webber

Budget Task and Finish Group

Cllr Keith McLean, Stephen Newton, Simon Rouse and Geoff Saul (1 Vacancy)

(5) That the established Complaints Sub-Committee and Budget Task and Finish Group be agreed with no changes to their terms of reference for the following year.

(6) That details of the Home Office Grant received by the Host Authority for 2022/23 be noted.

9 Police and Crime Panel's Annual Report 2022/23

The Panel's Annual Report for 2022/23 was submitted and Members placed on record their appreciation of the work of Councillor Keith McLean, the previous Chair of the Panel.

RESOLVED - That the Annual Report be adopted and published, and that Panel Members submit the Annual Report to their respective local authorities for information.

10 Report of the Complaints Sub-Committee

A report of the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee was received and noted.

11 Updates from PCC, Chair of the Panel and topical Issues report

The Panel received a report which provided details of topical police and crime issues and the following issues were raised.

In relation to the **changing age profile and experience of TVP officers**, the PCC was asked what he was doing to fill those gaps and to possibly links to retirees who could mentor new Police Officers. The PCC replied that this was a challenge and an opportunity. Part of the work on using Police volunteers involved trying to get ex Police Officers to come in and do some of that training. The Panel was informed that there may be a glut of officers leaving next year as a result of the pension changes because of the McCloud judgement.

A Leadership Academy was to be formed to support that development and learning and under the community policing portfolio there was a silver lead for Police support.

A Member raised an issue of residents feeling less safe with **anti-social behaviour** being one of the reasons for this and that she was pleased to read that there was a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour. The PCC was asked for his views.

The PCC replied that the most interesting thing to come out of this proposal was reparative justice which would involve for example, a person found defacing property with graffiti, having to clean the graffiti off. Combatting anti-social behaviour was a joint approach from local authorities and the Police on tackling this.

The topical issues report was noted.

12 Work Programme

Reference was made to the offer the PCC made of Members of the Panel visiting the Contact Management Centre and it was asked that visits be arranged before the Panel's next meeting as there was an item on the agenda about Contact Management – Update on performance of "101" Calls and on-line reporting.

The PCC asked that the proposal for a Panel meeting to be held at TVP Training Centre be either November or January.

The work programme was noted, and Members were asked to inform the Scrutiny Officer of any potential work programme items.