

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 22 June 2018, in Olympic Room Aylesbury Vale District Council Gatehouse Road Aylesbury Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.10 am and concluding at 1.15 pm.

Members Present

Councillor Eric Batts (Vale of White Horse), Bill Bendyshe-Brown (Buckinghamshire County Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes District Council), Councillor Trevor Egleton (South Bucks District Council), Julia Girling (Independent Member), Cllr Tom Hayes (Oxford City Council), Councillor Sophia James (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council), Curtis-James Marshall (Independent Member), Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council) and Cllr Emma Webster (West Berkshire Council)

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

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

Apologies

Councillor David Carroll (Wycombe District Council), Councillor Derek Sharp (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Chiltern District Council), Councillor Angela Macpherson (Aylesbury Vale District Council), Councillor Norman MacRae (West Oxfordshire), Councillor Pavitar Mann (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Iain McCracken (Bracknell Forest Council) and Councillor Alan Thompson (South Oxfordshire).

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

That Cllr Egleton be elected as Chairman to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing Year.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

That Cllr Mallon be appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel for the ensuing year.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hayes declared a Personal Interest as a trustee of a charity that delivers independent trauma advice in Oxford.

Cllr Webster declared a Personal Interest in Agenda Item 7 – PCC Annual Report, as she was a Member of the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chairman welcomed the following new Members who had been appointed to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel:

Cllr Robin Bradburn from Milton Keynes Council,
Cllr Sonia James from Reading Borough Council
Cllr Andrew McHugh from Cherwell District Council
Cllr Alan Thompson from South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Eric Batts from Vale of White Horse District Council
Cllr Norman MacRae from West Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr David Carroll from Wycombe District Council.

The Chairman also wished to place on record thanks to those Members who had departed from the Panel.

4 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 20 April 2018 and the Confirmation Hearing meeting held on 20 April 2018 were agreed as correct records.

[In relation to Minute No.159 – Chairman/PCC Update, the Panel was informed that the actions requested in relation to the Panel and the PCC responding to the consultation on the Government review of Council powers for unauthorised encampments had been carried out. A copy of the Panel's response would be circulated to Members. In addition, the draft protocol on unauthorised encampments which had been considered at a meeting between the Chief Constable and Chief Executives from each local authority in Thames Valley had been circulated to Panel Members.

Action: Scrutiny Officer

In relation to Minute No.161 – Police and Crime Plan – Performance, the Chief Finance Officer of the PCC reported that he would update Members on the initiative whereby partner agencies could obtain grant monies from the PCC (out of a budget allocation of £400,000 for 2018/19) to help the PCC deliver against areas within the Police and Crime Plan which were currently identified as gaps.

In relation to Minute No.161 – Police and Crime Plan – Performance, the Scrutiny Officer reported that information which had been requested on Camden Council's coercive control campaign which was being utilised by the OPCC, had been circulated to Panel Members.]

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

The Scrutiny Officer for the Panel reported that work on improving public participation and engagement in Panel meetings would take place for future meetings, with greater use of social media to publicise the role of the Panel and to promote public questions.

6 PCC ANNUAL REPORT

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 Crime Plan.

The PCC and the Deputy PCC and the Chief Constable were in attendance for this item.

The PCC introduced the report and informed the Panel that his current Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021 had been informed by a broad range of information which was reflected in five key priority areas:

- Vulnerability
- Prevention and early intervention
- Reducing re-offending
- Serious organised crime and terrorism
- Police judgment and reform

The PCC reported that budgetary constraints continued to be a big issue and this had an effect on how we policed and police numbers. There was an inadequate pool of funding nationally and funding between forces was inequitable. Reference was made to an article in last week's Sunday Times on police performance and detection rates, where Durham Constabulary excelled in terms of crime detection rates. The PCC commented that if he had the same level of funding as Durham he would be able to afford 1500 more police officers which would improve crime detection in the Thames Valley.

From the government grant money which was distributed from the Ministry of Justice, the PCC had set up a hub for victims support services, which was called Victims First, and which had been up and running from 26th March this year and would be developed further.

Reference was made to the Home Office encouragement for PCCs to seek to take overall responsibility for the governance of their local fire and rescue services. The Panel was informed that at the present time there would be no proposal from the PCC to make governance changes to the fire and rescue services in the Thames Valley. This was due to the complexities involved in having three county fire services within the Thames Valley as opposed to the one that most other force areas had. The PCC reported that he believed that rationalisation of the three services into one would happen eventually as there would be substantial operational and efficiency savings to be made by combining them into one 'Thames Valley' fire and rescue service, and integrating their operational support services and management systems with the Thames Valley Police support systems.

A major event in Thames Valley was the recent Royal Wedding. It had been a huge undertaking which was carried out impressively by the Police, with Assistant Chief Constable, Dave Hardcastle being the lead on this, working with many agencies to ensure a successful and secure day was had by the many visitors to Windsor on the day.

The PCC also referred to the President of the United States' visit to this country which would impact on Thames Valley Police, and another smaller Royal Wedding planned for later in the year.

The Royal Wedding cost TVP around £2-3m and under the Home Office rules, a claim could only be put in if it was equivalent to at least 1% of the annual Force budget, i.e. around £4m. However, the Force had been assured by the Home Office that it would be allowed to combine this cost with other claims this year such as the policing cost of the forthcoming presidential visit and Royal Wedding, which would both impact on the Thames Valley and the finances of the Force. It would be hoped that the Home Office would look at this aggregated claim favourably.

The introduction of custodian helmets had been well received, by both police officers and the general public, improving the visibility and presence of the Police.

In relation to the PCC's progress in meeting his objectives contained in the Police and Crime Plan and performance in particular, the PCC reported that there had been an 8.7% increase in crime in the Thames Valley, compared to nationally of 15%. There were 44,000 less crimes than there were 10 years ago and 58,000 less offences, compared to 15 years ago.

For crimes of violence against individuals, there was a worrying increase to 12.5%, but well below the national average. Sexual offences increased by 9.7%, compared to a 25% increase nationally. The PCC reported that a cause for concern was an increase in burglary by 9% which was just below the national average. An explanation for this was the changing criteria for the classification of crimes with for example burglaries now including garages and garden sheds.

A worrying increase was serious weapon offences, which had increased by 13%, but less than the national average increase of 25%. A reason for this was the running of crime out of "county lines" and the success of "stop and search", which when used properly and fairly, and with sound judgment increased the detection of such crimes. The Deputy Chief Constable had reminded all Local Police Area Commanders of the importance of using "stop and search" correctly.

In relation to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) annual inspection, TVP received a grade of "Outstanding" in terms of efficiency, "Good" for effectiveness and "Good" for legitimacy. These were the best overall results in terms of inspections for any police force in the country, with the exception of the better funded Durham.

The PCC expressed his concerns regarding crime reporting and gave an example of an anti-social behaviour incident which involved damage to several vehicles, having to be recorded as several separate crimes. Another example referred to a woman who had been enslaved, with a number of serious offences committed against her, which included several rapes. The Police were criticised for not recording every serious offence which had occurred. The PCC commented that crime reporting needed to be more realistic.

The PCC reported that with the new Home Secretary and with a Government comprehensive spending review taking place at the end of the year, this represented an opportunity for a strong case to be put forward for better funding for policing. Extra funding was needed to get more officers on the ground.

Panel Questions

1. In relation to Cherwell, there had been an increase in drug offences, usually along "county lines", and reference was made to drug offences only occurring when police officers were in attendance. In effect, what occurred to be bad news was actually goods news. The real scourge for Cherwell was county-lines drugs, which also lead to an increase in burglaries. Reference was made to gangs operating from Coventry as well as London.

The use of "stop and search" was effective in terms of arresting individuals for drug offences. "County Lines" was a huge problem with the Police only able to pick up the junior end of this problem. The major source of the gangs was in major cities. The PCC referred to the calls for legalising cannabis, as a means of controlling drugs and gang crime and commented that he did not agree with these calls, as there would still be gangs dealing in illegal elements of the drug and cited the illegal tobacco trade which had dealings in the black market.

2. In relation to the crime figures which had recently been released and which were skewed by the crime figures which related to the Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester Police and West Midland

Police, was there a Police Force of a similar size to the Thames Valley, where a comparison could be made, to measure the performance of the Thames Valley Police against this comparable force in terms of size and funding.

There were seven other similar forces to Thames Valley; Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Avon and Somerset, Hertfordshire, Essex, Sussex and Hampshire. In terms of crimes of violence for example, Thames Valley was the lowest in terms of crime. For household burglary, Thames Valley had the second lowest crime figures. Compared to Hampshire for violent crime, there were 5.8 per 1,000 residents for Thames Valley, compared to 11 per 1,000 residents for Hampshire. The PCC said he would circulate these figures to Panel Members.

Action: Scrutiny Officer

3. On page 12 of the report, in relation to “ Rape Investigation”, was the PCC confident that there had been an improvement in the data collection on domestic abuse and rape cases?

The PCC responded that he hoped so; however, there had been huge issues around disclosure. There had been some high profile cases which had collapsed because of disclosure issues. What was needed were higher convictions in court and for the Police and Crown Prosecution Services to get their acts together and enable juries to have confidence in the evidence before them.

4. What communication was taking place with PCC colleagues in the West Midlands regarding the trafficking of young people from Birmingham to Oxford for the purpose of Modern Slavery and “drugs-running”?

The Chief Constable reported that he had spent a day in Oxford with the Team which was dealing with this and they had been given a presentation by the Metropolitan Police who were dealing with Modern Day Slavery. The links with other forces were important and Thames Valley had links with West Midland force and the PCC who were carrying out lots of preventative work around healthy choices in schools, around knife crime and looking at behaviour at schools.

The Deputy PCC referred to a meeting he had attended with the Chief Inspector for the new Western Area of London, which covered Hillingdon, Hounslow and Ealing. Work was being carried out around missing persons and “County Lines” and this relationship would prove useful in terms of linking to the Thames Valley

The PCC reported that he had not specifically discussed this particular issue with the West Midlands PCC, but he would do so.

5. In relation to the Government’s new Violent Crime Strategy which acknowledged that prevention and early intervention was the key, what discussions has the PCC had with the Policing Minister regarding the structuring of the £11m Early Intervention Youth Fund.

The PCC would be commenting on the strategy but had not replied yet.

6. What was the PCC’s view on the comments by the Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police that a cut in police funding had led to an increase in violent crime?

The PCC commented that police cuts had now gone too far, and if the Metropolitan Police was complaining about cuts, there must be an issue. The Chief Constable commented that it was about the Polices’ ability to respond to Violent Crime and the changing nature of some of these crimes. Reference

was made to "County Lines" and the work which was being carried out in relation to this. "Sexting", grooming on line, that all came under this category and preventative work was needed.

7. In relation to "County Lines", there was a great emphasis on large towns within the Thames Valley; however "County Lines" affected little districts, such as South Bucks. South Bucks had the second lowest conviction rate in the country, so it was important that smaller districts were not ignored in these initiatives. There were issues with knife crimes and robberies, particularly in the south of the Thames Valley, which were close to the Metropolitan Police area and to Slough. In Aylesbury, for example, there had been some serious violence resulting from gangs along "County Lines".

Crime was coming out of large towns on "County Lines" and was getting into smaller towns and rural towns. Therefore "County Lines" was also impacting on smaller towns too. It was coming out of London, Birmingham and Liverpool and infiltrating all towns. Drugs were not made locally in small towns, but were being supplied by drug's gangs coming out of major cities, and were being run to these smaller towns.

8. Reference was made to Hate Crimes, which were not just perpetrated by extremists Islamic groups, but also by the extreme far right, particularly in London. The PCC was asked for details on what was being done to tackle this concern and what resources were being made available to tackle this problem, bearing in mind the Chief Constable's comments regarding stretched resources to tackle other crimes?

The PCC reported that Hate Crime was a major issue, and that the far right extremist threat, came mainly out of larger cities. However, it was important not to overestimate the threat, but to be aware of it.

The Deputy PCC reported that the Police Force had a good grip of this, with each Local Police Area being very much aware of the issue of the far right. There was not a major problem of this in the Thames Valley but the Police took the threat seriously. The Chief Constable commented that of the significant number of hate crimes, there were a number from the far right. The reporting of Hate Crimes needed encouraging but what was being seen, was quite a number of "channel referrals" from the far right, mainly from young impressionable people who might be being influenced. All agencies were picking this up and were aware of this.

9. There was an issue in Reading around a small Muslim community centre, and the presence of members of the English Defence League. The PCC was asked what was being done to work with the communities affected by racism and hate crimes and also what was being done on building relationships. What was the conviction rate around hate crimes?

The Deputy PCC reported that the conviction rates of those hate crimes which had got to Court was 90.4%.

Regarding the incident in Reading, the Chief Constable reported that hate crimes were being looked at with the Crown Prosecution Service. Initiatives depended on the area and from intelligence from the independent advisory groups in each of the areas. A lot of work was being done through Neighbourhood Teams in terms of building those links and engaging, so confidence could be built to enable people to come forward and report incidents. The Police wanted people to report the cases coming forward. Reference was made to information which was available on the Police website on how to report Hate Crimes.

10. A question was asked regarding progress being made on police officer recruitment with the

required degree level qualification, and a point was made that ex-servicemen and women must not be overlooked in terms of the qualities they bring, of discipline and understanding. In addition in relation to Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), who were the “eyes and ears” on the ground, there seemed to be a reduction in their numbers and an inability to recruit them.

The PCC reported that on the recruitment issue, all Police courses for this year were full. The Thames Valley region was an expensive place to live and areas such as Devon and Cornwall were more affordable. With regard to PCSOs, Thames Valley, unlike some Forces had retained these.

The Chief Constable informed the Panel that there were significant numbers of people still interested in joining the Police and in the March, April, May period there were over 600 people interested in joining. There was a capacity issue in terms of how many people could be brought through that process and to be tutored and mentored properly on policing. The key issue was retention, what more could the TVP do to retain people. Sometimes there was not much which could be done as people sometimes made life choices. In terms of PCSOs, the reason why their numbers were down was because a number had become full time police officers and because there was a capacity issue of getting the numbers through the door. The only reason PCSOs had been reduced would have been if partners had reduced their 50% funding.

There was a misunderstanding on the degree qualification; new recruits were not being made to be degree qualified when coming into policing. What was being said was if you looked at the training which the Police were giving new recruits, in terms of law and procedure, other professions which the Police were interacting with on a daily basis, were degree qualified. If a new recruit came into the Police they would be educated to a degree level equivalent, with the type of training now required. Apprenticeship schemes were topical but there was something about accrediting the work that people in the Police were doing and then rewarding them financially and recognising that in their pay.

11. In relation to the reporting of domestic abuse, concerns have been previously raised through the Panel and through the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub-Committee, about violence through Forced Marriage. Has there been any work undertaken on repeat domestic abuse under the cover of a marriage, of both men and women, who sometimes do not have the courage to speak out and sometimes where they do not speak the English language.

The PCC agreed that this was a difficult crime for people to report for fear of being ostracised. It was up to the voluntary organisations who worked in this area to provide the support to enable people to come forward and report these crimes. The Chief Constable referred to Phase III of the TVP’s Hidden Harm campaign which included Forced Marriages, was being launched in a week’s time and work was taking place with partners to reach out to people and to raise awareness. Details of this were available on the TVP website.

The PCC informed the Panel that there was an officer within the PCC who was dealing with this who would attend a future Panel meeting.

Action: PCC

12. A question was raised regarding the staffing structure at the Office for the PCC and at the lack of line management responsibilities of the Deputy PCC who had responsibility for Victims First. Should he have line management responsibilities?

The PCC reported that the line management of the officers of the PCC was carried out by the Chief Executive as directed by legislation and as the statutory Head of Paid Service. The Deputy PCC does not line manage; he had a whole raft of responsibilities which were clearly laid out.

RESOLVED

That a letter be sent to the OPCC in accordance with Section 28(4) of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 to review, report and make recommendations regarding the PCC's Annual Report 2017/18.

7 UPDATE ON COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

The report submitted to the Panel provided Members with feedback from Local Community Safety Partnerships across the Thames Valley.

In response to a question from a Panel Member, the PCC commented that it was important to know what was being done with the funding given to CSPs but overall he was happy with the way the model worked.

The Panel noted the report and welcomed all the work which was being carried out across the Thames Valley.

8 PCP ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman thanked the Panel's two Independent Members for their comments which were included in the report, and placed on record the Panel's appreciation for the work they had carried out as Members of the Panel.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Report be adopted and published and that Panel Members submit the Annual Report to their respective Authorities for information.

9 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE PANEL'S RULES OF PROCEDURE, PANEL MEMBERSHIP AND BUDGET

The Panel received the report of the Scrutiny Officer on the Panel rules of procedure, Panel membership and budget. No amendments had been submitted to the rules of procedure.

Discussion took place on the future location and possible broadcasting of meetings of the Panel. The Panel was informed that the present meeting location at Aylesbury Vale District Council had been considered the most accessible for all Members from across Thames Valley. However, the cost of webcasting meetings from "the Oculus" room at Aylesbury was prohibitive.

The Panel was informed that contact had been made with Reading Borough Council who had offered the webcasting and hiring of a room, at a more favourable cost. It was agreed that discussions take place with Aylesbury Vale District Council to negotiate a more cost effective price for Webcasting meetings from "the Oculus" meeting room.

After discussions it was agreed that as a trial, the February budget meeting of the panel be webcasted, and take place at Reading Borough Council offices.

In terms of Membership of the Panel's established Committees, the following memberships were agreed:-

Preventing CSE Sub-Committee – Cllr Emma Webster, Cllr Iain McCracken, Cllr Kieron Mallon, Cllr

Andrew McHugh, Cllr Sophie James and Julia Girling. (1 vacancy)

Deputies – Curtis James Marshall and 1 vacancy

Complaints Sub-Committee – Cllr Emily Culverhouse, Curtis James Marshall, Cllr Kieron Mallon, Cllr Bill Bendyshe-Brown and Cllr Eric Batts. (2 vacancies)

Budget Task and Finish Group – Cllr Iain McCracken, Cllr Barrie Patman and Cllr Eric Batts. (2 vacancies)

RESOLVED

1. That the Panel budget as outlined in the report be approved and Panel membership be agreed as detailed above.
2. That the actions outlined above in relation to the venue and webcasting of future meetings of the Panel be noted.

10 TOPICAL ISSUES

Consideration was given to a report by the Scrutiny Officer on Topical Issues. Particular reference was made to the decision that the PCC had agreed to fund a part-time post to be a TVP Single point of contact for taxi-licensing for a year. A Minimum Standards Framework had been produced for the post and had been approved by all Licensing Authorities and it was hoped that this document would be further developed later in the year. The PCC reported that his funding for the post would be for the first year, with the post thereafter to be funded by a financial contribution from local authorities in the Thames Valley. The Panel thanked the PCC.

Reference was made to crime reporting data and the implementation of the TVP's new Contact Management Platform (CMP) system and a request was made for the Panel to look at the impact of the new system once it had bedded in. The PCC reported that he would provide an update and some indicative information to the Panel at the November meeting but a full report would be submitted to the February meeting.

Action: PCC

The PCC was requested to provide a report to the November meeting of the Panel on the implications of the new Domestic Violence and Abuse legislation on TVP.

Action: PCC

In response to a question from a Member, the PCC reported that that he had offered to meet all MPs of the Thames Valley region and had met all but one. He said he would try again to set a meeting up with the one MP he had not met.

Reference was made to the introduction of the new Police Call Handling System which had been delayed. The PCC in response to a question informed the Panel that the cost for the delay would be jointly funded by TVPCC and Hampshire's PCC. The Chief Constable commented that the system interacted with lots of other systems and work was taking place on the infrastructure for the system with no completion date until this work was completed. It was agreed that a briefing note be provided for Panel Members on this.

Action: PCC

The Member for Reading Borough placed on record her thanks and appreciation to the work of the Police in evacuating people safely from the Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading when a suspicious

package had been found.

The PCC updated the Panel on the introduction of custodian police helmets. The cost per helmet was around £30 with a total cost of £35,000. The re-introduction of the helmets had been generally well received by the general public and increased the visibility of the Police.

The PCC referred to the announcement of the proposed merger between Devon and Cornwall and Dorset Police and the opportunities such mergers presented. For example, Forces could utilise centralised specialist capabilities.

11 WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted.

12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was 7 September 2018 at 11.0am at Aylesbury Vale District Council offices.

CHAIRMAN