

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 18 November 2022 in Paralympic Meeting Room, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.05 pm

Members Present

Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes Council – Co-Opted Member) (Chair), Councillor Eddie Reeves (Cherwell District Council) (Vice-Chair), 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 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 Claire Rowles (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council).

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner), Gillian Ormston (Chief of Staff, OPCC) 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)

32/22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Balvinder Bains (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Co-Opted Member – Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council) and Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council).

33/22 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT CO-OPTED MEMBERS OF THE PANEL**

The Panel was informed that on 14 November 2022, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Panel, with Councillor Simon Rouse interviewed candidates for the two vacant Independent Co-Opted Member roles on the Panel.

A point of clarification was raised by a Panel Member regarding the interview panel which was not politically proportional of the Panel and of the Thames Valley. The Chair outlined the process followed during the recruitment process and assured

Panel Members that the interviews were conducted consistently and fairly to the interviewed candidates. There was one successful applicant who was recommended to the Panel to appoint.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Panel confirmed the appointment of Mr Peter Gammond as an Independent Co-Opted Member of the Panel for a period of four years.

(2) That a recruitment process for the remaining vacant Independent Co-Opted Member be undertaken.

34/22 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

35/22 **PREVENT - WAS IT FIT FOR PURPOSE?**

The Panel considered a report of the PCC on a Thames Valley perspective of PREVENT. PREVENT was part of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and is a measure that aims to reduce the threat of terrorism in the UK.

A report of the Panel's Scrutiny Officer was also provided which gave further information on the strategy.

The PCC drew the Panel's attention to paragraphs 13 and 14 of the report which showed that Channel cases for Extreme Right-Wing radicalisation (per million population by region) were higher than Channel cases for Islamist radicalisation. This created a different challenge for Counter-Terrorism in the South East, of which TVP was the Host force.

Members' Questions

(1) The PCC was asked whether he was confident in the information sharing and how did PREVENT share data with Police Forces.

[The PCC replied that from a Thames Valley police perspective, he was confident that data was shared across Police Force boundaries and with other public agencies. There were challenges with general data sharing across boundaries, not just relating to counter terrorism.]

Relationships on the ground were good with Community Faith Groups, although these could be improved. Often it was about reassurance rather than identification. Reference was made to recent unrest in Leicestershire and contact was made with groups in Milton Keynes and Reading regarding the threat of this spreading. Local neighbourhood groups had contact and relationships with Faith Groups.]

(2) From the data included in the report, Channel cases for Extreme Right-wing radicalisation are higher than those for Islamist radicalisation. Was the PCC

happy that this was working with Channel and what engagement was taking place with Extreme Right Wing groups?

[The PCC replied that the philosophy used was not a policy of Thames Valley Police. The data was proportions of PREVENT moving into Channel. Spread across the country and the total of referrals adopted by Channel case by region, was 82 per million of the population across England and Wales and for the South East it was 84 per million of the population. This was in line with the average and the data suggested that the PREVENT policy was working.]

The PCC pointed out that it was difficult to measure the success of PREVENT as the measurements were based around incidents that have not happened.

The PCC reported that it was difficult to engage with Extreme Right Wing groups or individuals as there were no easily identifiable leaders. However, it was easier to engage with Faith Groups as leaders were easily identified.]

(3) The PCC was asked if he had details of the percentage of Extreme Right Wing groups and Islamist groups in the South East. The total of adopted Channel cases for the year ended March 2021 was 126 and the PCC was asked what percentage of these cases were from Extreme Right Wing groups?

*[The PCC replied that he would provide this information and email the details to Panel Members. **[ACTION:PCC]** It would be important to provide this information although it would not mitigate the risk. Some comfort could be taken from the figures that out of the 774 PREVENT referrals for the South East, 126 were adopted as Channel cases. This meant that 648 were not substantiated.]*

(4) The PCC was asked how did TVP approach the differences between the Far Right and Islamists and how were the not as easily identified Far Right groups tackled?

[The PCC reported that he was not sure if he could provide a strategic governance perspective on an operational policing issue. However, the policing of these issues was carried out well, with the community often not noticing what has gone well. Community tensions were prevented, and the policing provided community reassurance.

The PCC said visible policing provided reassurance to residents and were preventative in terms of quelling any tensions. In relation to the community tensions in Leicestershire, there were concerns between different faith groups at the tensions between different groups.

Reference was made to the attack at Forbury Gardens in Reading where work took place on TVP engaging with different groups and building relationships with LGBT groups. Preventative measures were put in place to offer residents reassurance.]

(5) The PCC was asked how was the data for PREVENT used over time?

[The PCC reported that Thames Valley Police was the host authority for South East Counter Terrorism and there were joint meetings between PCCs where data was looked at relating to case work. This data was scrutinised in the areas where there were rises and falls in incidents.]

RESOLVED – That the reports and the information provided at the meeting be noted.

36/22

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

The PCC provided the Panel with an update on Community Speedwatch. Members were reminded that the new Community Speedwatch scheme was launched by the PCC in October 2021 in conjunction with Community Speedwatch Online and managed by Roads Policing.

The main difference of this scheme was that the scheme was out of the hands of Neighbourhood Policing teams. Starter kits were provided for residents and volunteers which included a speed detection device.

The Panel noted that there were 217 groups across the TVP footprint, comprising of over 1200 residents/volunteers, and the system has been set up so that Councils can access information on all schemes in their LPA/jurisdiction areas.

Members' Questions

(1) The PCC was congratulated for the roll out of Community Speedwatch schemes in Thames Valley and from the data it looks like it is having an impact on recording speeding vehicles. However, there appeared to a disconnection between the collection of speeding data and actual enforcement. The PCC was asked for his view on this.

[The PCC agreed with the statement. Community Speedwatch was about education of motorists. The data used to be collected on paper on a voluntary basis, which the system did not enable a proper analysis of the data.

The Panel was informed that a motorist could receive 3 letters over a rolling 6 month period with any further transgressions leading to a visit by a Roads Policing Officer to discuss driving behaviour. There could be further escalations should the behaviour continue and ultimately could lead to enforcement. Local Neighbourhood Policing Team could be tasked to carry out an enforcement package.

Reference was made to sites where there were persistent offenders. This could be an issue caused by the roads design which may need redesigning the road to mitigate the speed.]

(2) Reference was made to resource and effort put into Community Speedwatch and the frustration at the lack of enforcement from the data gathered. Speeding hot spots were not being policed or enforced. The PCC was asked for his view on this.

[The PCC replied that the data provided should combat speeding vehicles. Resources used were primarily based on crash records and the need to look where the danger and speeding was on roads. The whole point was to build up the data and work on solutions for problem sites. There was a mismatch about community perception of what the aims of Community Speedwatch were.]

(3) The PCC was asked whether Community Speedwatch volunteers were given advice on how to deal with threats they received and how many threats were given to volunteers?

[The PCC replied that these incidents were the exception rather than the norm. There were a minority of threats received and the level of abuse took on different types of abuse. Engagement took place with the officer who managed the scheme.]

There was a preview of sites before volunteers were deployed, looking at road safety for the site. The safety of the volunteer was of most importance and the practicality of volunteers going out at night and when it was dark based limitations on the scheme. Overall, volunteers were safe and issues of threats were not a big issue.]

(4) The PCC was asked about the interactions which took place with local authorities on sites where it was determined that roads required speed being designed out.

[The PCC replied that there was a network of TVP officers and Council Highways and Road Safety officers who met regularly at a Thames Valley Road Safety Working Group to discuss road safety issues. There needed to be a new structure with a strategic group overseeing the work of the working group to enable the work to be carried out.]

The PCC referred to the need for a more joined up approach regarding communications to strengthen the work.]

(5) The PCC was asked what steps could be taken to tackle night time speeding when Community Speedwatch schemes did not operate?

[The PCC generally pointed out that there was no shortage of Community Speedwatch volunteers and the data provided to officers of Highways Authorities could be promoted more to highlight where speeding was taking place.]

There could be more funding for new groups of volunteers to start up Community Speedwatch schemes, with the PCC providing start up equipment. It had to be accepted that it would be difficult to undertake Community Speedwatch in evenings, mainly because of the safety hazards. Police enforcement with camera vans would be a better solution.]

The Chair commented that Milton Keynes Council had funded equipment and cameras to volunteers to monitor speeding. This helped TVP to detect other motoring crimes on sites such as using automatic number plate recognition and finding motorists with offences such as no car insurance, road tax etc.]

RESOLVED - That the report of the PCC, together with the information provided at the meeting be noted.

37/22

UPDATE ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

The PCC provided the Panel with an update on the recruitment and retention of police officers within Thames Valley Police Force.

Reference was made to there now being more police officers in Thames Valley than ever before mainly due to the Uplift programme with the headcount of warranted officers standing at 4,772.

The Panel was informed there was still an issue of officers who were leaving the Force due to retirement, resignation or dismissal.

At the end of March 2023, the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme would be coming to an end. This was the strongest officer recruitment and the latest news was that a degree was to be no longer compulsory for new recruits.

The PCC reminded the Panel that newly recruited Police Officers had to previously obtain a degree qualification within 2 years as a recruited Police Officer. Apprenticeships for a period of three years, also had to obtain a degree qualification within this period.

The report included updates on retention measures and how to increase application levels from BAME and female applicants. There were encouraging progression in this respect.

The PCC referred to the scheme to recruit military service veterans to TVP.

Members' Questions

(1) The PCC was asked whether the different tier entry into TVP had any effect on the advancement of individuals?

[The PCC replied that there was no difference in the tier entry in terms of progression.]

(2) The PCC was asked what work was being carried out to ensure there was not a drop off of applications from ethnically diverse candidates? There were 22% applications from ethnically diverse backgrounds in the pipeline, yet only 14% of officer joiners were from BAME backgrounds.

[The PCC informed the Panel that an engagement team had been established to improve engagement with BAME and female applicants. There were a variety of reasons for applicants dropping off during the recruitment process. It could be that late in the process, applicants decide that the Police was not for them. There could be personal or family reasons for the change in mind.]

The PCC said that the engagement team would talk to the individual to find out the reason for their dropping out of the process. Progress was being made.]

(3) The PCC was asked whether services such as the armed forces could work together with TVP to enable constructive relationships regarding transfers.

[The PCC replied that the challenge was to be more creative. There was already a good relationship with the Ministry of Defence and TVP made good use of Section 22 agreements to enable collaboration.]

(4) The PCC was asked what TVP was doing to attract more women into the service. Additionally, what more could be done to improve the retention of women in the Police.

[The PCC replied that staff associations were working on this, and work was taking place on improving the recruitment of women. There have been successful women and officers from BAME. There were talks which would be taking place in girls' schools to improve recruitment.]

(5) In relation to Police Community Support Officers (PCSO), the PCC was asked what could be done to recruit this vital resource, particularly for the work they carried out in the community such as with anti-social behaviour.

[The PCC referred to PCSOs who had progressed to Police Officers and who had become PCSOs to assess the attractiveness of a career in policing. There could be an option of tying in PCSOs to a time period and work was taking place on recruiting to the PCSOs vacancies.]

(6) The increased number of Police Officers is most welcome, however, there still required work to be done on improving the ratio of Police Officers to the population of Thames Valley. Reference was made to the national vetting issues on the recruitment of Police Officers which had resulted in unsuitable recruits in the Police and the PCC was asked for his views on getting the right people in the Force.

[The PCC replied that by the end of the financial year it was forecast that TVP would have its highest number of Police Officers by per 1,000 population of Thames Valley.

Regarding problems with police vetting, the PCC was concerned at Police Officers who were particularly transferring between Forces, slipping through the vetting procedures. There was a strong culture within TVP where concerns regarding officers would be highlighted.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners would be discussing vetting to ensure that there was consistency across Forces, however, vetting is not always the issue, as any officer may fall foul of disciplinary or criminal issues in a few years. The culture of the Force was very important in terms of identifying problem officers.

In response to a comment regarding policing numbers in Milton Keynes and the lack of Police support for a recent bonfire, the PCC said he would provide an update after investigating. [ACTION: PCC].

(7) Reference was made to the policing numbers and that the increase in Police Officers belied residents' impression at the lack and visibility of Police Officers on the streets. The PCC was asked to comment on this.

[The PCC reported that the numbers were correct, but he agreed regarding visibility and that Police Officers on the street were important for crime prevention. Work needed to be done on improving visibility. Officers were in neighbourhoods and still in their policing areas, but they responded to other incidents.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC and the information provided at the meeting be noted.

38/22 **MULTI AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUBS**

The Panel noted that this item had been requested some time ago and had been placed in the work programme for 2022/23. The Panel membership had changed and therefore the reason for the item was not clear to some Members.

The PCC was asked to present a fuller report to a future meeting providing information on how the PCC was holding the Chief Constable to account for TVPs role and performance in the 9 MASHs within Thames Valley (six in Berkshire, one in Oxfordshire, one in Milton Keynes and one in Buckinghamshire). The information should provide details on how MASHs are coordinated across the Thames Valley and information on performance on safeguarding across the different size of MASHs across Thames Valley.

The information was noted.

39/22 **ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2021 FROM THE JOINT INDEPENDENT AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Panel received the Annual Assurance Report 2021 from the Joint Independent Audit Committee to the PCC for Thames Valley and the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

40/22 **HOST AUTHORITY FOR THE PANEL AND APPOINTMENT OF NAMED SUBSTITUTES FOR ELECTED LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS AND CO-OPTED LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS OF THE PANEL**

The Panel considered a report which informed Members that the Chair's local authority, Milton Keynes Council has indicated that it does not wish to take on the role of Host Authority for the Panel.

Members of the Panel were written to, inviting expressions of interest from their respective authorities to Host the Panel. There were no expressions of interest

submitted apart from the interest expressed by Buckinghamshire Council at the last Panel meeting.

Discussions have taken place between relevant officers at the present Host Authority, Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire Council who have expressed an interest to Host the Panel. Oxfordshire County Council has served notice that it will no longer be Host Authority and subject to approval of the Panel, the hosting function will be transferred from April 2023 to Buckinghamshire Council.

The Panel was informed that Buckinghamshire Council has asked, that consideration be given to Buckinghamshire Council being Host Authority for a 3-year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026, to provide continuity of support to the Panel. The reasoning behind the request for a 3-year period, is to enable Buckinghamshire Council to plan in terms of budget and staffing which is more difficult to do if the hosting arrangements are reviewed, and potentially changed, annually.

Discussion took place on the request for a three-year period and it was noted that there was no objection to Buckinghamshire Council's request, however, there was the proviso that the Chairmanship of the Panel could change in the three year period which could mean there would be another change of the Host Authority.

There was a request that the Panel's Co-opted local authority Members be afforded named substitutes as other local authority Members had. This was agreed by the Panel and the Panel Arrangements were asked to be updated to reflect this.

RESOLVED – (1) That the information reported be noted and the Panel approved that the hosting arrangements for the Panel be transferred from Oxfordshire County Council to Buckinghamshire Council from April 2023.

(2) That approval be given to Buckinghamshire Council's request that the hosting arrangements be for a 3-year period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026, however, it was acknowledged that this could be reviewed should the Chairmanship of the Panel change, and his/her local authority should wish to take on the responsibility of being the Host Authority for the Panel.

(3) That the Panel Arrangements be updated with the change to hosting arrangements taking effect from 1 April 2023 through to 31 March 2026, subject to future decisions on the Chairmanship of the Panel and decisions on the Host Authority.

(4) That approval be given to the Panel Arrangements and Rules of Procedure being updated to include the appointment of named substitute local authority elected Members and Co-Opted local authority Members to attend Panel meetings in the absence of the appointed elected and Co-Opted Members.

REPORT OF THE COMPLAINTS SUB-COMMITTEE

The Panel received and noted a report from the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee on three recent considered complaints against the PCC which were not upheld.

42/22 **UPDATE FROM THE PCC AND THE CHAIR OF THE PANEL AND TOPICAL ISSUES**

The Panel received and noted a report of topical issues relating to crime and policing.

A Member referred to an asylum seeker who had been moved to Buckinghamshire from London after allegations of a sexual offence. The PCC was asked to take this issue up with the Metropolitan Police regarding the potential safeguarding implications.

43/22 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel was provided with the work programme for future meetings.

It was agreed that an update be provided on Race and BAME representation within TVP at a future meeting.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing