

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 23 September 2022 in Paralympic Meeting Room, Buckinghamshire Council Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 12.55 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), 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), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Diko Walcott (Oxford City Council) and Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council)..

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner)

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)

23/22

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF THE PANEL FOR 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR

Members of the Panel were asked for nominations for the Chair of the Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Both Councillors Keith McLean and Robin Bradburn were nominated and seconded to be appointed as Chair of the Panel for 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Upon being put to the vote, Councillor Keith McLean was appointed as Chair of the Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Councillor Keith McLean took the Chair

24/22 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE PANEL FOR 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

Members of the Panel were asked for nominations for the Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Both Councillors Robin Bradburn and Eddie Reeves were nominated and seconded to be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Panel for 2022/23 Municipal Year.

Upon being put to the vote, Councillor Eddie Reeves was appointed as Vice-Chair of the Panel for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

25/22 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Maria Gee (Wokingham Borough Council).

26/22 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye be added to the list of Members present and Minute No.20/22 – Minutes – The Minutes agreed should read 8 April 2022.

27/22 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

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 Plan.

At the start of this item, Members of the Panel praised both the PCC and Thames Valley Police for the policing operation carried out in Windsor for the Queen's funeral.

The PCC also wished to place on record his thanks to the huge logistical operation which took place for the Queen's Funeral.

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

Members' Questions

(1) Reference was made to the strong local policing priority, and the PCC was asked how this could be a priority, when neighbourhood policing resources were being diminished across Thames Valley. An example was given of policing in rural areas, where one Team consisting of one sergeant, one police constable and two PCSOs, covered four rural villages. This could not be regarded as strong local

policing. How was the PCC to ensure that the public would get strong local policing, which was paid for through the police precept?

[The PCC replied that he would not disagree with what was said. The influx of new officers had protected elements of their training which meant that more experienced officers were extracted from their normal duties to support the new police constables. The PCC said he had raised this with the Home Office as he saw this has a flaw of the current regime.]

Neighbourhood policing was important; however, policing resources were having to deal with lots of other concerns from the public. Dealing with 999 and 101 calls were a priority.

The PCC commented that local policing was not just about neighbourhood policing, neighbourhood police would still be policing as part of response teams. The only way to resolve this would be working with the new Chief Constable on using police resources efficiently across all the policing areas. The model of policing is built around response policing. Neighbourhood policing should be about crime prevention.

Visibility was a good thing, however, the PCC commented that it was more important to him to see the Police making more arrests.]

(2) The PCC was asked what was the response from the Metropolitan Police to the number of PCCs who had expressed concern regarding the Metropolitan Police recruitment drive which included offering a “golden handshake” to officers in other forces?

[The PCC replied that it did pose a real risk to recruitment of officers transferring between forces. He was pleased to say that talking to officers, many have said they were tempted by the extra money, but they did enjoy working in Thames Valley and working for their local force. There had been an increase in the SE weighting which was a big help.]

(3) There had been concerns for some time to the response times to 101 calls, reference was made to a strategic plan with the incoming new Chief Constable. Would the Panel have the opportunity to have sight of this strategic plan and what did the PCC think the performance of 101 calls will look like?

[The PCC replied that an update had been received from the Chief Constable at the performance and accountability meeting. He had been asked to form firm operational plans of what was needed in terms of staff. There had been an increase in resources for contact management.]

(4) With knife crime on the increase, particularly in Slough and in view of the limited Police resources, what is the PCC and TVP doing to prevent this?

[The PCC commented that he was meeting with the father of the victim who had been killed in Slough. The PCC would also be meeting with the Chief Constable and the MP for Slough, Tan Dhesi, to discuss what can be done. Preventing knife crime was not just about resources. The Police can request extra resource if needed.]

There were several aspects to knife crime. In Slough, there had not been an actual increase, but there were differences between an ABH or threat and an actual murder. This was the challenge of knife crime.

The PCC referred to Operation Deter which had been used in Milton Keynes which had had some successes. The PCC said he would like this rolled out in other areas as soon as possible. It does bring some successes and is a deterrent.

The PCC reported that he would be working with the local MP and Slough Borough Council. There were wider issues in the area, it was just not about policing. There were other issues in play such as community cohesion, schools, youth programmes, the lack of employment opportunities.

The PCC worked closely with local authorities around “softer” community engagement. The real issue was persuading people not to carry knives in the first place.]

(5) Community Forums were funded by TVP, and recently at a Forum in Milton Keynes, 30 residents were present, but there were no representatives from TVP. In relation to recruitment, there was a Jobs Fair in Milton Keynes where both the Metropolitan Police and the British Transport Police were represented, but not Thames Valley Police. The PCC was asked why was this?

[The PCC replied that from experience it was believed that a stand-alone recruitment event produced better results as three Forces being at the same event was often not beneficial. However, the PCC would take this away and re-look at this approach for future events.]

The Chair also referred to an event taking place in Milton Keynes on 14 October 2022, Milton Keynes Innovates where TVP had declined an invitation to attend.

(6) The PCC was asked for an update on the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers to fill the existing vacancies.

[The PCC replied that TVP were below where they should be in terms of recruitment. Reference was made to a number of PCSOs who had become Police Officers which was career progression for the individual but created a problem for TVP in terms of losing PCSOs. PCSOs were currently understrength across all areas and TVP would be looking at different schemes to retain PCSOs going forward.

The PCC commented that PCSOs should have more powers and there were different models which could be used. If they had more powers they could contribute more to policing.

Regarding retention of PCSOs, there could be a policy whereby they had to serve a certain length of service and other methods to help with retention.]

(7) The PCC was made aware of the annual survey which took place in Reading, in which there had been an increase in residents’ fear of crime, particularly around

anti-social behaviour. It was acknowledged that PCSOs could not be everywhere and that anti-social behaviour which was a local authority responsibility was on the increase. The PCC was asked how local authorities and TVP could work better together for residents.

[The PCC acknowledged that the fear of crime was on the increase and confidence in policing but referred to many perpetrators of crime emanating from outside Thames Valley but leaked out into this region. There was an issue of people getting through on calls to 101, which frustrated residents.]

TVP performed very well on the “high harm” crimes but there needed to be an improvement in performance.

CCTV was a useful tool in preventing anti-social behaviour and work was taking place on partnership work between the Police and local authorities to roll coverage out. Wokingham Borough Council was doing some good work in this area.

Reference was made to the work of Thames Valley’s Community Safety Partnerships who provided robust responses to Anti-Social Behaviour.]

(8) Could the PCC provide details on the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Partnership Board meeting which took place in May and what was he hoping to achieve with this partnership work? In addition, whilst Violence Against Women and Girls is not one of the six priorities in the PCC’s Police and Criminal Justice Plan could the PCC offer reassurance that this crime is taken seriously? Also, in relation to Safety Streets Funding would there be more of this funding available?

[The PCC replied that whilst Violence Against Women and Girls was not one of the six priorities, there were elements throughout his Plan covering this area. TVP carried out lots of work around Domestic Abuse, the Night-Time economy and there was soon to be a Safety of Women and Girls in Public Places scheme, which would come to the Panel for comment.]

The Partnership Board would be shortly meeting again, and the Board brought together various partners, including the private sector, schools, universities, colleges to work on VAWG.

The PCC referred to Safer Streets Funding, in which there had been a couple of successful bids. He envisaged that this would continue, although there could be an opportunity to change this with a new Policing Minister.]

(9) The PCC was asked for an update on the review of CCTV provision and establishing a Thames Valley partnership.

[The PCC reported that the latest situation was that a new CCTV manager had been appointed and TVP had broadly got the system it required. A single specification was being looked at and a review of equipment was taking place. The first area this was likely to be rolled out to was Milton Keynes because they already had their own control room.]

The next places would be Slough because of the particular challenges and Oxfordshire because of the pragmatic work which was already taking place within the County with the District Councils.

In places like Bracknell, where there was considerable local authority coverage, the PCC reported that he had had conversations with private sector providers who were looking at CCTV providers. This would make the network even more effective.]

(10) The PCC was asked about the Community Speedwatch scheme as parish councils in South Oxfordshire had expressed concern about speeding, particularly with individuals racing at night. There was concern that there may be complacency from the Police and residents did not hear back when reporting these incidents.

[The PCC commented that Community Speedwatch was not the solution to these problems. Community Speedwatch was mainly for speeding vehicles through villages. The problem of racing vehicles was difficult for the Police to deal with as it would involve Police pursuits. Average speed cameras would be a solution and reference was made to the pilot scheme in Hampshire. The PCC was awaiting the outcome of this trial to see their effectiveness. This was a complex problem.]

(11) What was the PCC doing to monitor the effectiveness of the schemes where organisations went into schools to talk about organised crime? There did not seem any evidence to suggest this approach worked.

[The PCC replied that the commissioning process looked at the evidence around these schemes. On the wider point of the interventions, the PCC agreed that it was important to see evidence that these interventions worked with school children. It was important that children were engaged on these issues.]

(12) In relation to the PCC's objective Improving the Criminal Justice System, reducing re-offending, there was a newspaper article in which it stated that in Thames Valley sentencing for knife crimes had reduced. A lot of knife crime not being punished. Was this having an impact on the number of people carrying knives?

[The PCC replied that this was outside his remit as PCC, but the whole point of sentencing was to serve as a deterrent to crimes. For the lower-level knife crimes, magistrates can sentence for up to a year. The PCC talked about the pressures on the agencies in the Criminal Justice System which caused delays in court cases.

The PCC talked about the cohort young people who were part of criminality and who were almost untouchable. This needed to be broken up and what was needed was tougher sentencing which included custodial sentencing.

In response to a question about what the PCC meant about low level crime, the PCC reported that across the Thames Valley there were around 5,000 to 6,000 knife crimes committed a year. The majority were for possession, with a small number resulting in injury.]

RESOLVED - That 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 2021/22.

28/22

REVIEW OF PANEL RULES OF PROCEDURE, COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE, APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS, PANEL MEMBERSHIP, APPOINTMENT TO SUB-COMMITTEE'S AND TASK GROUPS AND HOME OFFICE GRANT TO THE PANEL

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 2021/22.

Members were informed that since the last meeting of the Panel, the two Independent Co-Opted Members have resigned, and the Panel was asked to agree the process for appointing two new Independent Co-Opted Members.

Discussion took place on the Hosting of the Panel, and the Chair informed Members he would discuss the hosting arrangements with his Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer.

An expression of interest to Host the Panel was given by Buckinghamshire Council and it was agreed that any other expressions of interest to Host the Panel be submitted to the Chair and the Scrutiny Officer to the Panel.

A decision would be taken at the next Panel meeting on the hosting arrangements after discussions have taken place between relevant officers within the existing Host Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) and authorities who have expressed an interest in hosting the Panel.

RESOLVED – (1). That the Rules of Procedure and Panel Arrangements for the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel “the Panel” be updated (as attached in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report) to reflect the changes arising from the decision to the representation changes for Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes Council.

(2) That the Panel notes that with the appointment of the new Chair of the Panel, that a decision is required on the Host Authority for the Panel. It was agreed that this decision would be taken at the next meeting of the Panel after further discussions have taken place.

(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 Chair, Vice-Chair and Councillor Simon Rouse be appointed as the Members involved in the recruitment process for the appointment of the two new Independent Members to the Panel, with Councillor Karen Rowland also consulted throughout the process.

(5) That the following Members be appointed to the Panel's Complaints Sub-Committee and Budget Task and Finish Group:-

Complaints Sub-Committee – (Councillor Balvinder Bains (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Peter Brazier (Co-Opted Member – Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor David Cannon (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Co-Opted Member – Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Karen Rowland (Reading Borough Council) and Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council)).

Budget Task and Finish Group – (Councillor John Harrison (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Geoff Saul (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Keith McLean (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor Eddie Reeves (Cherwell District Council) and Councillor Simon Rouse (Co-Opted Members, Buckinghamshire Council).

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

7) That details of the Home Office grant received for 2021/22 for the operation of the Panel by the Host Authority be noted.

29/22 POLICE AND CRIME PANEL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Panel's Annual Report for 2021/22 was submitted and Members placed on record their appreciation of the work of Councillor Marilyn Davies, 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.

30/22 UPDATE FROM PCC AND THE CHAIR OF THE PANEL AND TOPICAL ISSUES REPORT

The PCC informed the Panel that John Campbell, the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police would be retiring at the end of March 2023. The process for the recruitment of a new Chief Constable was already underway and it was hoped that the PCC's preferred candidate would be selected to enable the Panel to hold a Confirmation Hearing after the next Panel meeting on 18 November.

The Panel had before it a report provided by the Scrutiny Officer which provided topical issues around policing and crime.

A Member referred to the recent media headline around the Mayor of London referencing the work of TVP in decriminalising cannabis to free up officers' time and the PCC was asked for his view of this.

The PCC replied that TVP had not decriminalised cannabis, but TVP had implemented a system which sped up the process for dealing with offenders. A programme which looked at conditional cautions and directed users towards drug support. The PCC did not support the decriminalisation of cannabis.

31/22

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel was provided with details of its work programme for 2022/23.

It was agreed that the following be added into the work programme:

- Progress update on Contact Management – 18 November or if not possible in January.
- TVP – the data around arrests by ethnicity– January meeting.
- Illegal Encampments across Thames Valley – January meeting.

It was agreed that the meeting on 24 March 2023 be extended to enable the work programme items which “slipped” as a result of the June 2022 Panel meeting not being completed.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing