

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 19 June 2020 in Virtual, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 12.50 pm

Members Present

Councillor Kieron Mallon (Oxfordshire County Council) (Chairman), Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward (Reading Borough Council), Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor David Cannon (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Elizabeth Jones (Independent Member), Councillor Norman MacRae (West Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor John Harrison (Bracknell Forest Council), Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council), Councillor Mohammed Nazir (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor David Rouane (South Oxfordshire District Council), Councillor Claire Rowles (West Berkshire Council) and Councillor Dr Louise Upton (Oxford City Council).

Officer Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

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

Changes to Membership to the Police and Crime Panel

The Chairman reported the following changes to the membership of the Panel

Cllr Adele Barnett-Ward- (Reading Borough Council) (Replaced Cllr James)
Cllr Claire Rowles – (West Berkshire Council) (Replaced Cllr Woollaston)
Cllr Dr Louise Upton – (Oxford City Council) (Replaced Cllr Chapman).

Buckinghamshire Council appointments (Co-opted Members appointments subject to interview)

Councillor Bill Bendyshe-Brown
Councillor Julia Adey (co-opted)
Councillor Emily Culverhouse (co-opted)
Councillor Ray Sangster (co-opted)
Councillor Mark Winn (co-opted)
Councillor David Carroll (Standing Deputy Member)

Councillor Trevor Egleton – Former Chairman of the Panel

The Chairman wished to place on record his appreciation of the work of Cllr Trevor Egleton as former Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel who was no longer a Member of the Panel.

10/20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was submitted by Phillip Morrice (Independent Member).

11/20 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 14 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12/20 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

Consideration was given to a report which summarised how the Police and Crime Commissioner and Thames Valley Police responded to the Coronavirus pandemic since the national emergency measures were introduced by the Government in March 2020.

The Chairman thanked Thames Valley Police for the work they had carried out during the Pandemic.

Questions

(1) What provision did the PCC and the Chief Constable make to ensure that front line Police Officers had Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that Thames Valley Police were the lead force in terms of procuring PPE nationally and officers in the Thames Valley had been adequately supplied during the pandemic to enable officers to carry out their duties safely.]

(2) Could details be provided on the increase in Domestic Violence which resulted, particularly, once lockdown was eased?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that unsurprisingly all crime across the Thames Valley had dropped, including Domestic Violence. This could have been because people were frightened to report crimes or because during self-isolation people were not seeing the perpetrators of such crimes. However, since the easing of lockdown, there had been evidence of Domestic Violence increasing. Reference was made to the emergency number victims could use and if they were frightened officers would get back to them.]

The Chief Constable expressed his concern that victims of Domestic Violence would not be able to access support services such as charities and local authorities. Reference was made to a vulnerability task force which had been set up who carried out risk assessments on known victims of Domestic Violence. Over 1500 victims had been contacted and overall the response had been positive.]

(3) Were there any indications that children were suffering more than adults in terms of abuse during the pandemic?

[The Chief Constable reported that during lockdown there had been a reduction in the reporting of cases. This was because schools were a main source of reporting of such crimes. However, there had been an increase nationally in the number of cases of the sharing of indecent images of children. Once schools were reopened it was expected that there would be an increase in the reporting of abuse against children and police resources would be ready for this.]

(4) In relation to crime reporting reference was made to the decreases in telephone calls to TVP during the Pandemic. Should local authorities be promoting greater use of on-line reporting.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that it was much easier if the public reported crime on-line, however, this was not the preferred way by most of the public, particularly the elderly.]

The Chief Constable commented that there had been a reduction in the number of calls during the Pandemic, but a significant number of calls were taken regarding Covid 19 breaches. Callers were encouraged to report on-line and this had resulted in a 176% increase. The message had been, if the crime was happening now, stay on the line, otherwise report the crime on-line if possible.]

(5) With the message promoting the on-line reporting of crimes, how have calls to "101" been affected and if it has, is the crime intelligence being received? Reference was made to a couple of residents who had given up reporting crimes to the "101" service.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner informed the Panel that if "101" was not working well, there would be a reduction in crime reporting because people would not be bothered. In the past there had been problems with the "101" service, but this had been rectified with an increase in call handlers.]

The Chief Constable said that he was not aware of the intelligence aspect being reduced. He commented that crime across the Thames Valley was currently down 15%, compared to this time last year. Burglaries were down 37%, Section 18 woundings were down 30%, thefts from motor vehicles were down 49%. This was mainly due to there being no night-time economy during the Pandemic. In general terms crime was coming down but he did not think this had been due to problems of people trying to contact the Police.

"101" Call handling was much improved, and he did not think this had an impact on the reduction of crime. On-line reporting was working and there had been a number of crime reports which had started to build up.]

(6) Reference was made to the powers given to the Police to help tackle the spread of Covid 19 and a question was asked regarding the number of occasions police actions had been considered heavy handed?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that in his opinion the rules which had been introduced had been heavy handed. However, he believed that the Police had not been heavy handed in enforcing the legislation.]

Regarding the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices, Thames Valley had issued a high number of these because of the size of the force area and because Thames Valley had one of the biggest road networks in the country. TVP were stopping a lot of drivers who were on the road during lockdown when there were restrictions on peoples' movement. Reference was made to Fixed Penalty Notices being issued, for example, to drivers of expensive BMW cars, wearing hoodies, who may have been driving during lockdown for no good reason.

The Chief Constable commented that it had been a challenging time for the Police having to enforce the regulations, but the approach of the Police had been to engage, explain and only to enforce as the last resort. The issuing of FPNs had reduced with the easing of the restrictions and the increasing mobility of the public. A significant number of those stopped were in the male age range of 18-25 and were stopped for offences such as driving in vehicles with individuals from different households. He was not aware of any complaints against the Police, although challenges could be made throughout the FPN process and in court if offenders did not pay the fine.

Monitoring was taking place through community groups such as through the strategic stop and search independent advisory group, Professional and Ethical Standards Panel (formerly the Complaints, Integrity and Ethics Panel) to assess independently how the Police have behaved.]

(7) A Member referred to the Police and Crime Commissioner's use of the phrase "people in BMWs in hoodies" and asked the Police and Crime Commissioner what the significance of that phrase was, as neither were in themselves crimes.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that during Lockdown when a valid reason had to be given for travelling a distance down the motorway, it became a bit more obvious in relation to "County-Lines", when expensive cars, driven by someone very young, was travelling. Overall, this type of crime had been reduced during Covid 19, but during Lockdown and with the powers the Police had, people were being stopped and were asked for their reasons for travelling, which meant inroads were made in relation to drugs trafficking out of major cities and into the Thames Valley.

Historically, it was found that those people who tended to be involved in these types of crimes were very often young and drove expensive cars.]

A supplementary question was asked which was what were the combination of factors which the Police used when deciding to stop drivers during Lockdown and were there any statistical evidence to suggest that the profile of individuals, outlined by the Police and Crime Commissioner were targeted. Reference was made to anybody travelling a distance should have had a legitimate reason for travelling and a sector of society should not be discriminated against.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that the Police were not discriminating against the young and were picking up any person who did not have a legitimate reason to be travelling a distance. Over the course of this, the Police were able to pick up "County-Lines" criminals.

The Chief Constable clarified that TVP did not target any individuals based on their vehicle types or their clothing. The tactics used by TVP were monitored by the community groups.]

(8) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked whether Police Officers had been assaulted by members of the public and whether support was being given to Police Officers who had been under criticism from some of the public for their enforcement of the Covid 19 Regulations.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that overall assaults on Police Forces were down because of the restrictions, however, there had been incidents of people deliberately coughing or spitting at Police Officers and these had been dealt with appropriately. He gave total support to the Police regarding assaults. The Chief Constable added that there had been around 50 Covid 19 related assaults on officers and strong support has been given by the Courts and the public to Police actions. The Police and Crime Commissioner's Office was supportive and there was a seven point plan which was put into action if an officer was assaulted.]

(9) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked whether the ethnic mix of those people who were receiving penalties was in line with the demographics of the Thames Valley or were there certain ethnic groups being overrepresented?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that he did not have those figures but he believed that those people receiving penalties were representative of the population of the Thames Valley.]

The Chief Constable commented that within the overall enforcement of the penalties there had been some disproportionality in terms of ethnic mix but this depended on which area of the Thames Valley you carried out the enforcement, and this skewed the figures. Monitoring took place to delve deeper into these statistics.]

(10) With crime figures falling but policing costs having increased, and with the Home Office providing extra funding, could the Police and Crime Commissioner provide further details on this. In addition, with unemployment increasing which would result in increased crime, what will the impact be on the service, particularly with Police Officers having to take accrued leave because of the Pandemic.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that TVP would be owed a lot of money from the Home Office. There was a relationship to unemployment and crime. Reference was made to the lack of a night-time economy which had reduced crime. Household burglaries were down because people were at home. Those crimes which were still being committed were investigated in more detail which resulted in a greater clear-up rate. The Police and Crime Commissioner expressed concern that there would be an increase in crime in the Autumn.]

Ian Thompson, Chief Finance Officer of the PCC reported that monthly reports were submitted to the Home Office providing details of extra costs relating to Covid 19. The Panel was informed that up till May, there had been a net increase in spending of

£12.1 million, of which £11.25 million was spent on buying PPE as part of the national cause. TVP distributed PPE nationally.]

RESOLVED – That the report submitted be received and the Police and Crime Commissioner be thanked for the detail he had provided to the Panel.

13/20

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S ANNUAL REPORT - 2019-20

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 introduced the report and informed the Panel that the report covered the activities undertaken and progress made by the PCC during the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020, in meeting the objectives contained in his Police and Crime Plan 2017-2021.

The TVP performance headlines were reported. Crime levels reported to TVP increased by 7.6% in 2019/20 compared to the previous year (2018/19). This compared to a national increase of 6%.

Although challenges remain, there had been a number of successes such as a 4.1% reduction in residential burglary. A proactive increase in the use of Stop & Search was directly related to the increase in the number of possession of weapons (+18%) and possession of drugs (+21%) incidents.

The PCC referred to volume crime outcomes which continued to be a challenge and reference was made to an increase in both rape and sexual offence crimes on last year. This was primarily due to better reporting and putting more resource into this area. There remained challenges in getting these cases through the Courts.

Reference was made to inspections from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service where generally TVP received good reports. However, outcomes of crime were not taken into consideration and two of the best inspection reports were for forces who had the worst outcomes of crime in the country.

Questions

(1) In relation to Strategic Objective 3, Reducing Re-offending, the Police and Crime Commissioner was asked about the increase in the use of "Stop and Search" and whether he had details on the breakdown of who was being targeted and whether it was being carried out proportionately.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that he did not have the figures but "Stop and Search" was being used very much in line with how it was previously used. The reduction in "Stop and Search" resulted in higher crime communities. The use of "Stop and Search" was carried out very much on the judgement of the Police and he believed it was used reasonably. The Complaints, Integrity and Ethics Panel and the

Audit Committee regularly monitored the figures. It was agreed that details on “Stop and Search” would be circulated to Panel Members outside the meeting.]

(2) How should the Panel interpret the report in terms of performance as there were no outcomes detailed in the report. Was there a reason for changing the format from last year?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner said this could be looked at. The Chairman commented that comparisons could be made with previous years if the formatting was the same and outcomes were included to show the performance in the PCC’s Strategic Objectives. The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to this.]

(3) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked for an update on the rationalisation of the Real Estate, particularly in relation to Princes Risborough, where the Police Station was meant to be a joint facility with the Fire Station.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that the rationalisation of TVP’s Real Estate was taking place, however, it was realised that the rationalisation could be much bigger because of Covid 19, with people satisfactorily working from home. Details on progress with Princes Risborough Police Station would be provided to the Panel Member.

The Chairman referred to the whole of the public sector real estate and it was acknowledged that across the public sector, including local authorities and the emergency services, work needed to take place jointly on rationalising buildings which would save money and improve the public’s access to various public services.]

(4) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked about the successes in the Police use of drones to augment helicopters and whether their use would be extended.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that drones would be used more and referred to the expense of using National Police Air Service (NPAS) helicopters. The NPAS fleet of 19 helicopters were coming towards the end of their lifespan and there was no reasonable prospect of being able to replace them because of the cost. Drones were relatively inexpensive and were very effective. Helicopters cost £2,000 to £3,000 to hover over a public event. The use of drones would increase in the future.

Reference was made to limitations of drones whereby due to Civil Aviation rules, drones could not operate outside the sight of its operator.]

(5) Could the Police and Crime Commissioner provide details on the improvements which have been made in the management of Organised Crime Groups and County Lines?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner informed the Panel that these were major issues, although TVP had greater control because in the south east of England, serious organised crime was headed up by TVP on behalf of the Police Forces in this area.

The Chief Constable informed the Panel that “County Lines” was an issue for many forces, although during Covid 19 this was reduced because of restrictions on movement which reduced the transportation of drugs and people. TVP did work very hard and well with other forces in disrupting “County Lines” operations and this was a priority for the force and for the Government.]

(6) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked about the grants he gave out for Community Safety, which ensured some good work was carried out. In relation to Victims and Witness services, was the funding based on needs or was it shared out equally?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner reminded the Panel that he was one of very few Police and Crime Commissioners who funded Community Safety Partnerships. The imbalance of funding came about because of the way the Ministry of Justice was distributing funding to Councils. The PCC tried to balance this up by funding through Community Safety Partnerships. Thames Valley PCC had a very good Victims First Service which was based in Reading and worked well for victims. A great deal of work was done in Slough and he did not believe that the work was carried out disproportionality in the Thames Valley.]

The Chief Finance Officer of the PCC commented that Victim Services commissioned or co-commissioned services for domestic abuse through local authorities. That was complex needs domestic abuse services.]

(7) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked for details on what TVP was doing in relation to internet fraud and scams?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that fraud was one of the biggest crimes in the country and it does not receive the resource or effort on a national level that other crimes received. There were not enough officers trained to deal with it and there were no regional anti-fraud teams. The Police possibly only investigated around 2% of fraud cases which was a national disgrace. Reference was made to Action Fraud, which was the national fraud service, based in a call centre in Glasgow and run by the City of London Police.]

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, if appropriate, regarding the PCC’s Annual Report 2019/20.

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL'S ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

The Panel noted the Police and Crime Panel Annual Report which summarised the activities of the Panel during 2019/20.

The Chairman summarised the work of the Panel throughout the year and thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable for their efforts in helping the Panel throughout the year.

Particular reference was made to the Panel's work programme items for the forthcoming year which included:

- Exploitation - Preventing CSE/Modern Slavery/Forced Marriage/Hidden Harm/FGM
- Rural Crime
- Community Safety Partnerships Updates
- Update on Recruitment and Retention within Thames Valley Police
- Update on Local Policing Model
- Property/Assets – Looking at shared facilities between TVP and other “blue light” emergency services
- Work and Structure of the Thames Valley Road Safety Working Group/Safer Road Strategy
- Progress on Violence Reduction Unit

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

15/20

TAXI-LICENSING COORDINATOR SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT POST

An update was provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner on the Taxi-Licensing Co-ordinator Single Point of Contact Post and the Panel was asked to discuss the effectiveness of the post and the future funding of the post going forward.

The Police and Crime Commissioner questioned whether the post added value and suggested that that the taxi licensing co-ordinator should be a Council post to enable better co-ordination.

A general discussion took place and the following points were made:

- There needed to be national taxi licensing guidelines and standards to ensure consistency across all licensing authorities
- There needed to be a single flow of information from one officer co-ordinating across the Thames Valley
- The Police and Crime Commissioner said he would raise the issue of standardisation of licensing guidelines through the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners but that he would need a paper on taxi licensing from a Council officer with expertise.
- A possible Thames Valley conference be held for all licensing authorities to enable a consistent set of taxi-licensing standards to be agreed. There was concern that this would be unworkable because of the differences across the licensing authorities of the three counties
- The Local Government Association (LGA) be approached to ask them to consider the matter because of the difficulty in getting approval of standardisation across all the licensing authorities. National guidance could be issued which could be forwarded to other PCPs and licensing authorities.

After discussion of the above options it was:

RESOLVED - (1) That the Police and Crime Commissioner be asked to raise the issue of standardisation of licensing guidelines through the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

(2) That the LGA be approached to ask them to consider getting the approval of national standardisation of taxi licensing guidelines across all the licensing authorities.

16/20

CHAIRMAN AND PCC UPDATES AND TOPICAL ISSUES

The following written question was submitted:

(1) The Police and Crime Commissioner was asked whether any reviews had been undertaken to ensure that the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement were being addressed by TVP.

Has the commissioner sought information on:

- The current make-up of the force regarding protected characteristics compared to the community at large
- What training is given to officers in order to overcome any inherent prejudice
- Any statistics that are available regarding the number of people issued with penalties for breaches of lockdown and whether these have been disproportionately issued to people from the BAME communities.

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that TVP had become more representative of the communities it served in the Thames Valley during his term as PCC. The Chief Constable was making a huge effort in terms of recruitment; however, this could not be sorted out overnight. It would be a long process as existing Police Officers tended to have long careers. A huge effort was being made to recruit people from the Black and Minority Ethnic groups and there had been an increase. Reference was made for the need to recruit fairly and not to discriminate against any other ethnic group just to increase another ethnic group's proportionality. The Chief Constable reported that protected characteristics included being a representative police service of the community, in terms of the legitimacy of the service, reflecting and looking like the community it served.]

The Panel was informed that there were 7,500 staff, of which 56% were female. Asian and Black staff accounted for 7% of the workforce. That was 535 staff who self-identified as BAME, although there were a number, as a matter of personal choice who did not self-identify. It was acknowledged that representation was too low, and it was assessed that it should be around 14% of the force being from BAME. There were around 5.5% of Police Officers in TVP who were from BAME.

The Chief Constable acknowledged that this was too low. A positive action team had been created, comprising of BAME staff, who had been using their experience and knowledge in recruitment to increase applications from the BAME community. During recruitment in June, there were 330 applications, with 24% applications from the BAME community, which was encouraging. This needed to be translated into a

reflective and transparent service as it was important that TVP had a diversity of background, in terms of visibility and of thought.

All training given to Police Officers included equality training. The Chief Constable reported that regarding inherent prejudice there were checks and balances put in place. There was a developed selection process where applicants were given on-line testing with scenarios given and these can tease out any prejudices. In addition, there was a 2-3-year course before an officer could be accepted into the Police Force where a lot of the training was to do with diversity and understanding communities. There was an embedded code of ethics which new recruits signed up to ensure that standards were always maintained by officers. There was a reporting mechanism to report any individuals who may have acted inappropriately.

The Black Lives Matter protests were bringing forward issues that everyone empathised with and TVP took on board the sentiments of the campaign as they sensitively policed the peaceful demonstrations which have taken place.

The Police and Crime Commissioner said that statistics would be provided on the number of people issued with penalties for breaches of lockdown with a breakdown of which ethnic groups. The Professional and Ethical Standards Panel (formerly the Complaints, Integrity and Ethics Panel) would be looking at that.]

(2) What engagements were taking place with BAME groups regarding increasing the number of BAME applications to join the Police. Additionally, what strategies were in place to enable the advancement of BAME staff within the Police service?

[The Police and Crime Commissioner replied that there were BAME officers who had got to the top as would any individual with talent. It was important that this talent was recognised, and they were given the opportunity to reach the top. There were people from ethnic groups throughout the country who were represented at senior levels in the Police. Reference was made to the United States of America where there were many Chiefs of Police in major cities from ethnic backgrounds, and yet there were race issues amongst Police Forces.]

The Chief Constable commented that to change the profile of the Police, there needed to be the throughput of officers from ethnic backgrounds at junior levels to push themselves forward. There was a development programme which had been put in place to support BAME officers who were showing potential which should prepare them to be given the best opportunity to progress and gain promotions. There was a fine line between positive discrimination and negative discrimination, but the Police had support from all the staff associations within the Police on the approach taken. Therefore, progress had been made in terms of greater ethnic representation in the higher ranks of the Police but more needed to be done.]

A Member of the Panel made the point that the assertion made by the Police and Crime Commissioner that all individuals with talent would get promotions, could only be made if the proportion of BAME representation at senior levels, reflected the proportion of BAME officers coming into the Police Force at recruitment level. Also, the onus was on the Police Force to make itself more attractive to certain ethnic groups to enable the Police Force to be representative of the communities it served.

RESOLVED – That the topical issues report be noted and the PCC and Chief Constable be thanked for their responses to the submitted questions.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing