

Minutes

Minutes of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel held on Friday, 10 September 2021 in Paralympic Meeting Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 8FF, commencing at 11.00 am and concluding at 1.35pm.

Members Present

Councillor Marilyn Davies (West Oxfordshire District Council) (Chair), Councillor Balvinder Bains (Slough Borough Council), Councillor Adele Barnett-Ward (Reading Borough Council) (attended remotely), Councillor Robin Bradburn (Milton Keynes Council), Councillor David Cannon (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead) (attended remotely), Councillor David Carroll (Buckinghamshire Council), Councillor Maggie Filipova-River (South Oxfordshire District Council (Substitute Member attended remotely) Councillor John Harrison (Bracknell Forest Council) (attended remotely), Liz Jones (Independent Member) (attended remotely), Councillor Andrew McHugh (Cherwell District Council), Phillip Morrice (Independent Member), Councillor Richard Newcombe (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor Richard Rouse (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor Claire Rowles (West Berkshire Council) (attended remotely), Councillor Dr Louise Upton (Oxford City Council) (attended remotely), Councillor Richard Webber (Oxfordshire County Council) and Councillor Mark Winn (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member).

Officers Present

Khalid Ahmed (Scrutiny Officer).

Others Present

Matthew Barber (Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner), John Campbell (Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police – (attended remotely), Catherine Marriott (Head of Partnerships and Community Safety, PCC) (attended remotely) and Ian Thompson (Chief Finance Officer of PCC (attended remotely).

Apologies

Councillor Emily Culverhouse (Buckinghamshire Council - Co-Opted Member), Councillor Neil Fawcett (Vale of White Horse District Council), Councillor Barrie Patman (Wokingham Borough Council), Councillor Sam Casey-Rerhaye (South Oxfordshire District Council – Councillor Maggie Filipova-River substituting) and. Paul Hammond (Chief Executive Officer of PCC),

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)

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 25 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Andrew Hill, attended the meeting remotely, and through the Chair of the Panel, asked the Police and Crime Commissioner the following questions relating to Item 9 – PCC Community Safety Fund Update:-

- (1) Based on figures aggregated on crimerate.co.uk, the Local Authority in Berkshire with the highest absolute number of recorded crimes is Reading (just over 17000, crime rate 66/1000). The PCC proposes to cut the CSP for Reading by 52% by 2024.

The local Authority with the highest crime rate by a considerable margin is Slough at 92/1000 of the population. The PCC proposes to cut the CSP for Slough by 40% by 2024.

Other safer areas are awarded increased CSP allocations.

Could an explanation be given to how a new alleged “needs based formula” has led to by far the largest cuts in the need for community safety funding occurring in the two areas with objectively the most crime?

[The PCC replied that the previous PCC had worked closely with the Police and Crime Panel to develop a fairer “needs based” formula, which considered data around population and crime related factors. This had never been fully implemented.

Reference was made to the reworking of the formula which was weighted in relation to Population (50% weighted), Crime (25% weighted) and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and fear for welfare (25% weighted). For example, Oxfordshire, has the largest funding based on population and ASB.

In the past, both Reading and Slough have benefited, with the most funding. Therefore, the decision to include non-crime demand on top of recorded crime was intentional. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) have always been asked to take a lead role in anti-social behaviour and supporting preventative work.

In response to a supplementary question regarding the crime levels in Windsor and Maidenhead and whether the Chief Constable had been consulted on the weighting of crime in the formula change, the PCC replied that the crime levels in Windsor and Maidenhead were 5.9%, compared to Thames Valley wide all crime levels of 5.7%. Community Safety fell within the remit of the PCC.]

- (2) In agenda item 9, Mr Barber states that the Home Office has not made any commitment to extend funding of CSP's beyond the current financial year. Nonetheless the PCC publicity surrounding this has repeatedly stated that “funding has been secured for three years”.

Whist, I appreciate your intent and desire to continue these schemes, can the PCC explain why funding that could be withdrawn at any time is being triumphantly presented to the public by the TVP PCC as if it were entirely new

funding, moreover using the inaccurate word “secured” when the funding is neither new (it’s legacy funding) and (in reality) is more accurately described as unsecured? Or has TVP committed to using its own reserves to fill any gaps that may occur if the Home Office withdraws funding for CSP for future financial years?

[The PCC replied that Home Office funding was allocated on a yearly basis, but it was hoped that the comprehensive spending review would extend this to funding for 3 years. The PCC reported that he would write to Leaders of councils. He disagreed with the questioner’s opinion that this was political and referred to local authorities with different political administrations receiving increased funding. There were winners and losers under this new formula.]

Reference was made to the PCC’s commitment to supporting CSPs and to enable longer term planning, it was intended to commit to three years of funding for local authorities. This would allow CSPs to commit to multi-year projects that support the Police and Criminal Justice Plan.]

33/21 THEMED ITEM - RURAL CRIME

The Panel was provided with a report by the PCC which outlined key activity which was being undertaken or planned by Thames Valley Police in relation to tackling rural crime and supporting Thames Valley’s rural communities.

The PCC reported that in the last 12 months there had been a re-focus on rural crime by the force, endorsed and supported by the PCC and Chief Constable.

A summary of the key changes included:

- The introduction of a dedicated team of officers to tackle rural crime – the rural crime taskforce.
- Revised and enhanced force governance to ensure appropriate strategic, tactical and operational oversight and direction.
- The introduction of a revised rural crime strategy
- The introduction of a revised force definition for rural crime to improve recording, data and analysis
- Rural crime training for call centre and control room staff
- The introduction of a new rural crime communication strategy.

Reference was made to the new definition for Rural Crime; “offences that relate to farms, agriculture, wildlife, the environment and heritage sites where they are targeted due to their isolation or rural location”.

The Chair of the Panel referred to the success of the WhatsApp Country watch messaging service which provided the sharing of fast time information and intelligence with rural communities.

Members’ Questions

- (1) The new definition of Rural Crime was narrow. What about crimes in rural villages such as thefts, burglaries etc which are crimes committed in rural areas.

[The PCC replied that all crime should get the same level of service throughout the Thames Valley and that rural areas should not be treated differently to urban areas. The resources would be different, but it all evolved around neighbourhood policing. Discussion took place on crime in rural areas and the different issues which rural communities had which went beyond issues of theft.]

The PCC referred to the work which was taking place regarding the link between mental health, suicide, and the rural and farming communities. Work was taking place with partners to raise awareness and provide support for those in rural communities who may be struggling with mental health.]

- (2) In relation to the Rural Crime Taskforce and the size of the rural areas in Thames Valley, will the number of officers realistically be enough to cover the large rural geographical area?

[The PCC replied that rural areas tended to be outside urban areas and officers would be deployed and specialist equipment as and when required. Some rural crime may be linked to organised crime so speciality officers would be used.]

- (3) There are some areas with high levels of rural crime, Aylesbury Vale, South Oxfordshire, Chiltern and South Bucks etc. What crime prevention work will be carried out in those areas?

[The PCC said it would vary and depend on the types of crime. It was recognised that these areas required preventative work and work was taking place with landowners on prevention work. An example was on the security of vehicles, with tagging of vehicles taking place. Attitudes had changed with landowners ensuring their vehicles were secured.]

- (4) Reference was made to tracking devices on vehicles and the PCC was asked about protocols with neighbouring Forces to enable police pursuits of tracked vehicles into other Force areas?

[The PCC replied that this was a significant challenge, but work was taking place to address this. Bedford and Northants Forces worked with Thames Valley.]

- (5) A criticism of rural communities is the lack of Police visibility in rural areas and that the nearest police stations can be a distance away. Are there any plans for rural areas to have a police presence in shared facilities with local authorities/partners?

[The PCC replied that property sharing did take place with other partners. The Rural Task Force would ensure greater visibility. Reference was made to Police Community Support Officers who often patrolled the streets in unmarked vehicles who may not seem visible but were out and about serving the community. In response to a point made about the funding, the Panel was informed that the PCC had allocated funding in the 2021/22 budget, however, there would be corporate sponsorship funding.]

- (6) In relation to the new definition for rural crime to improve recording, data and analysis, what have been the results of these improvements?

[The PCC reported that it was a bit early to say, however, TVP call handlers had been trained on the specifics of the new definition to ensure correct recording of crimes took place.]

- (7) Reference was made to the Rural Crime Snap Guides which provided information and legislation to officers to ensure they dealt effectively with rural crime and the PCC was asked why was hare coursing not included in the guide?

[The PCC replied that this would be covered under the hunting with dog's category.]

- (8) Reference was made to the role of the Crown Prosecution Service and the need for specialist knowledge on rural crime.

[The PCC said he would take this on board as ensuring the CPS was aware of the special nature of rural crime was essential to tackle the problem.]

RESOLVED – That the report and information provided on Rural Crime be noted.

34/21

HMICFRS INSPECTION REPORT - ROADS POLICING

The Panel was reminded that its meeting in November 2020, the PCC was asked to report back on the outcomes arising out of the recommendations contained in the HMICFRS report on Roads Policing as they applied to Thames Valley Police.

The Panel was provided with a report which updated Members on TVP's response to the recommendations of the report. Reference was made to HMICFRS who had conducted an audit of TVP's Roads Policing Unit in Q1 2021 which concluded that the Unit's processes and structure were appropriate and effective and were working to support the recommendations of HMICFRS' report.

Members' Questions

- (1) Recommendation 7 requires that forces should publish the annual revenue received as a result of the provision of driver offending-related training and how that revenue has been spent. Does the PCC/Chief Constable intend to "ring fence" this revenue for roads policing and possible road safety initiatives?

(The PCC replied that the vast majority of this revenue is ringfenced. A meeting would take place in relation to this funding, looking at what can be done with it with an opportunity to be creative.)

- (2) Could further details be given on TVP's compliance with Recommendation 8 (Department for Transport Circular 1/2007 in relation to the use of speed and red-light cameras) and what this means?

[The PCC replied that this was to ensure that speed and red-light cameras were used appropriately. The PCC said he would share more detailed information on this with Panel Members.] **[Action: PCC]**

- (3) Recommendation 10 states that resources allocated to policing the strategic road network should be sufficient. Could an explanation be provided on how this would work in the long term in the Thames Valley, particularly as roads policing is a shared operation with Hampshire Constabulary?

[The PCC reported that roads policing was a constant challenge, with residents wanting roads policing in their area. Roads Police Officers had their bases which they operated out of, but they had the capability to cross borders and help out. This provided resilience and a balance with the local and strategic road network, but local roads were focussed on as needed.]

RESOLVED - That the report of the PCC be noted.

35/21

UPDATE ON AVERAGE SPEED CAMERAS

The PCC provided a report which provided the Panel with information on the differences between different speed enforcement camera types, with advantages and dis-advantages of each, as well as providing further understanding of the capital/revenue expenditure of each system.

Particular reference was made to the minimum distance of 75-250 metres that a 2-camera system could operate and the high costs, with up-front investment costs for a two-camera system currently being in the range of £120k-£150k. These costs could be prohibitive.

Members' Questions

- (1) Reference was made to the calming effect of average speed cameras on motorways where there was roadworks, and which worked. Was there any good data which could be used to justify these cameras for dangerous roads, such as on dual carriageways, where these cameras could be cost effective and would save lives?

[The PCC replied that there were not many roads where these cameras would work, however they could potentially work on the A34, south Oxford. However, several cameras would be needed. A benefit of this would be linking average speed cameras to the Automatic Number Plate Recognition enforcement cameras, however, there would be legal and technical issues. This could be explored but would be costly.]

- (2) A Member from Buckinghamshire Council referred to an application made for speed cameras through Road Safety Funding which was refused by TVP as there was a policy of not introducing speed cameras and the PCC was asked for his views on this blanket policy of not installing new speed cameras.

[The PCC said he would take this up with the Chief Constable and Roads Policing, but it was sensible not to have a blanket policy on this.]

(3) What were the criteria for the use of fixed speeding cameras and average speed cameras?

[The PCC reported that there would be different criteria. With a fixed camera you would be looking to slow down traffic and average speed cameras were used on a greater length of road.]

(4) The PCC was asked whether consideration had been given to approaching housing developers to fund the possible use of these cameras in areas of major housing developments to improve road safety?

[The PCC replied that this had not been considered and it would require discussions with local authorities.]

Reference was made to Bedfordshire an area that had average speed cameras and that information could be sought from the relevant local authorities and from the Force.

RESOLVED – That the information contained in the report be noted

36/21

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH

The Panel was provided with a report which updated Members on the progress made in relation to implementing Community Speedwatch in the Thames Valley.

The PCC informed the Panel that the aim of Community Speedwatch was to empower community groups to educate road users about safer speeds and to provide valuable data to the police.

Some of the improvements to the scheme would include:

- Day to day operation would be supported by Community Speedwatch Online, which provided an online platform for registration, training, session planning, data entry and analysis.
- Clearer promotion of the scheme with a single point of contact.
- Speed detection devices and other equipment could be provided to start-up groups on a loan basis and funded by the OPCC (subject to demand and ongoing funding availability).
- Regular communication with volunteers, improved training, improved processes to provide for better enforcement by police for persistent offenders.
- Better use of data to assist with police enforcement.
- Improved training for neighbourhood teams to support Community Speedwatch

The Panel was informed that there were 25 groups currently operating under the new pilot scheme in Wycombe and South & Vale LPAs. It was planned to roll out the scheme in a phased approach, across the Thames Valley in Spring 2022.

In relation to enforcement, neighbourhood teams and then Roads Policing would go out and focus on problem areas and if there was a still a problem, conversations could take place with local authorities to look at preventative measures to slow traffic

down. The possession of data would act as an evidence base to enable action to be taken.

Members' Questions

- (1) With local communities involved in the scheme and providing that local knowledge of sites where speeding occurs, how will the PCC ensure the data collected by these local groups is used effectively to enable enforcement?

[The PCC replied that the system provided a technical link from the system the Police used for issuing speeding letters and the Community Speedwatch online.]

- (2) The PCC was asked whether ANPR technology could be used for educating drivers about speeding, which included for example, driving too close to cyclists did agree.

[The PCC commented that he agreed that poor driving needed to be addressed, including driving too close to cyclists, but he was not sure that ANPR was the answer for this as he was not sure the nature of the technology would allow it as things stand.]

- (3) Could the PCC produce an explanation of his ambitions on Community Speedwatch to enable Parish Councils to build into their budgetary cycle, the funding required to purchase equipment for the scheme?

[The PCC replied that budgetary cycles were important and communication regarding the scheme would come out early next calendar year. The PCC's personal ambition was to fund these speed cameras, however, he had to be realistic regarding financial constraints. It could be that equipment could be loaned out to Parish Councils. All would be revealed early next year.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC be noted.

37/21

PCC COMMUNITY SAFETY FUND

The Panel was provided with a report of the PCC which informed Members of the changes to how Community Safety Funding would be allocated, which was based on a fairer "needs based" formula, which considered data around population and crime related factors.

The PCC reported that the formula had been reworked to incorporate three factors:- Population (50% weighted), Crime (25% weighted) and non-crime demand, such as Anti-Social Behaviour and fear for welfare (25% weighted).

The PCC commented that it was acknowledged that population had the most significant impact on community safety demand and his decision to include non-crime demand ahead of recorded crime was intentional. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) took a lead role in anti-social behaviour and were increasingly being asked to support preventative work, which they were well placed to deliver.

Members' Questions

- (1) A Member referred to the last meeting of the Panel when the PCC's Police and Criminal Justice Plan was presented. The perception had been that his priorities had favoured local authorities aligned to the PCC's voter base. The proposals for the Community Safety Fund supported this view. Could the PCC explain what should Reading and Slough CSPs cut from their activities with this reduction in funding?

[The PCC rejected the accusation and said the decision on funding was not political. He referred to 2014/15 when the Office of the PCC had worked closely with the Panel to develop a fairer "needs based" formula, which considered data around population and crime related factors. This had never been fully implemented.]

The changes would be implemented gradually to enable all local authorities the time to transition to the new arrangements. Both Reading Slough had benefited hugely in the last 10 years from this funding, and both would continue to receive significant funding as well as "in-kind support" and there would be other opportunities for these areas to get funding such as with Public Health. Slough also receives funding from the Home Office.

The PCC referred to both Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire, which were not Conservative-run local authorities who had received significant funding under the new formula.

The three-year allocation would give more certainty to local authorities and allow for more long-term projects and referred to there being no guarantee of this funding. The PCC said he was confident that he would be able to fund this for three years.]

- (2) The representative of Slough referred to the unique characteristics of the Borough and asked that consideration be given to having a rethink on this funding.

[The PCC said that there was a Community Safety Fund of £7.72m over three years which had to be shared amongst CSPs in Thames Valley. This new funding formula was a fairer system for allocation based on the criteria earlier described. There may be opportunities for further external funding for other initiatives and referred to the Choices programme in Slough where this could be the case.]

- (3) There was concern from CSP officers that the PCC may be more prescriptive on what the funding could be used for and this allied to local authorities having to make savings, would impact of community safety initiatives.

[The PCC replied that funding would be approved on the basis of spend proposals being in line with the objectives of the Police and Criminal Justice Plan and released on a quarterly basis subject to satisfactory reported progress. Local authority plans would be looked at on this basis and around discussions with the Office of the PCC.]

- (4) There was a welcome to the continued multiyear support of the PCC with this Community Safety funding. The use of the non-crime demand element of the formula, how will the impact of that focus be tracked?

[The PCC replied that each CSP would have different priorities and through discussions with the Office of the PCC there would be a look at outcomes. Some areas have different anti-social behavioural problems.]

RESOLVED – That the report of the PCC on the new funding formula and the allocations to CSPs for the next three years be noted.

38/21 **JOINT INDEPENDENT AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT 2020**

The Joint Independent Audit Committee Annual Assurance Report for 2020 be received.

39/21 **UPDATES FROM CHAIR OF THE PANEL AND PCC / TOPICAL ISSUES**

The Panel received a report which provided details of topical issues and media reports relating to policing and crime.

The PCC reported that two new posts had been appointed to his Office: Head of Partnerships and Community Safety and Head of Victims Services.

The PCC informed the Panel that he had received a letter from the Chairman of the National Police Council thanking TVP's Chief Constable for the supply of PPE to all Police Forces during the Pandemic.

Members Questions

(1) Reference was made to Cherwell's CSP meeting where it had been reported that stalking and harassment had increased by 120%, which was a significant increase. Were there any plans for the PCC to prioritise this offence.

[Reference was made to the use of Stalking Prevention Orders which placed restrictions on offenders. A league table was recently published which had TVP at the bottom of that table. The Chief Constable had promised that more use of these orders would take place and there would be an improvement. There were a number in process and the Force did take these offences seriously.]

(2) For domestic abuse, at Cherwell's CSP meeting a statistic was reported that 2% of domestic abuse victims had been abused by their perpetrator more than five times. Why were these perpetrators still not convicted?

[The PCC replied that domestic abuse was a complex area. Gathering evidence and securing prosecutions was not easy and took time. Cases needed to be taken to Court quicker. Perpetrators may be put on programmes to stop offending as some victims do not want their perpetrators to be convicted but they want them to stop abusing them.]

(3) There were victims of domestic abuse who did want justice. However, the criminal justice system was often too slow in bringing cases to court. Could the

PCC look at the recent pilot which took place at Aylesbury Crown Court where there was an accelerated programme for domestic abuse cases and introduce this throughout Thames Valley?

[The PCC reported that there was a new temporary crown prosecutor, and the scheme would be mentioned to him. However, there was a bigger problem around the backlog of all court cases, not just domestic abuse.]

(4) Reference was made to a recent questionnaire issued by the Home Office on additional powers for PCCs such as powers to engage in property regeneration. Some of these were a distraction from the main responsibility of the PCC, of policing and crime. The PCC was asked were there any additional powers he thought would be beneficial to his Office.

[The PCC replied that the consultation was also out to PCCs. Regarding the General Power of Competence, he did not think it was appropriate to his Office. There were some interesting areas such as greater scope for PCCs in Offender management, wider areas of the Criminal Justice System giving more powers over the CPS. Fire and Rescue was an obvious area which could be looked at.]

(5) The PCC was asked for his views on aligning Fire and Police Governance in the Thames Valley under PCC control.

[The PCC commented that as a member of the public, he could see the advantages of Fire and Police joint governance. However, at this time this was not a priority but over time, he could see this being pushed forward from the Home Office. Good collaborations were already taking place with the Fire Authorities across Thames Valley.]

(6) The use of CCTV is proven, but in Buckinghamshire there has been an idea of having one control room linking all the systems, possibly in Milton Keynes. Could the PCC provide an update on this?

[The PCC said this was a complex area and perhaps this could be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.] **[Action: PCC]**

(7) The Police should follow up after domestic abuse has been reported but Social Services should get involved as Police Officers were not as well trained in respect of DV. What's the PCC's thoughts on this.

[The PCC commented that there were complexities with domestic abuse. TVP Officers did receive specialised training and they were familiar with how to deal with it, however, domestic abuse was a difficult and complex area.]

RESOLVED – The report and the information provided be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME

A discussion took place on the Panel's work programme for the rest of the Municipal Year.

Domestic Abuse – For the next meeting of the Panel, on the themed item on Domestic Abuse, the PCC was asked to provide an update on the practise in domestic abuse cases of arresting both the abused and the abuser at the same time and if possible, could information be provided on TVPs performance in this respect.

Hate Crime – This was requested to be added as a work programme item. A Member referred to Afghan refugees and asked the PCC what provision did TVP have in place to secure the hotel facilities being used.

In addition, reference was made to the importance of communicating to the refugees the role of police in terms of law and order and the Panel was informed that the National Police Chiefs' Council was coordinating a national response to this with refugees receiving a welcome pack.

The PCC disagreed with the Member regarding the primary responsibility but informed Members that TVP was aware of the location of these sites and would monitor them.

In addition, reference was made to the importance of communicating to the refugees the role of police in terms of law and order and the Panel was informed that the National Police Chiefs' Council was coordinating a national response to this with refugees receiving a welcome pack.

Strategic Priorities – When was it appropriate to provide updates on the performance against these priorities. The PCC said he would be happy to be report on issues which were covered in the priorities and the PCC Annual Report would provide an update and progress in achieving the aims of the priorities.

CONCLUSION OF THE CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS REGARDING THE ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (EQUIP) SYSTEM

The report provided for this item was considered in public, but the discussion took place with no public present.

RESOLVED – That the public be excluded during this item because its discussion in public would be likely to lead to the disclosure to members of the public present of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person as detailed in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended):

It is considered that in this case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The PCC provided the Panel with the background to the report. Members were informed that a report on the issue would be considered by the Joint Audit Committee of TVP and PCC.

Members were informed that the PCC had asked the Internal Audit Team to look how the governance of large projects were managed in the future. The PCC said he would update the PCP on the outcome of this review on the governance of general arrangements for the future. **[Action: PCC]**

..... in the Chair

Date of signing