

Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7th December 2020

Present:

Chair

Councillor Alistair Bradley, Chorley Borough Council

Committee Members

Councillor Mohammed Khan, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Councillor Afrasaib Anwar, Burnley Borough Council
Councillor Munsif Dad, Hyndburn Borough Council
Councillor Keith Iddon, Lancashire County Council
Councillor Robert Boswell, Preston City Council
Councillor David Whipp, Pendle Borough Council
Councillor Simon Hore, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Sue Bibby, Ribble Valley Borough Council
Councillor Jackie Oakes, Rossendale Borough Council
Councillor James Flannery, South Ribble Borough Council
Councillor Gareth Dowling, West Lancs Borough Council
Councillor Roger Berry, Wyre Borough Council
Councillor Peter Le Marinel, Wyre Borough Council
Mimi-El-Khattan, Independent Co-opted Member

Also in attendance

- Clive Grunshaw, Police and Crime Commissioner
- Angela Harrison, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Steve Freeman, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Ian Dickinson, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- Ashley Brown, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- David Fairclough, Secretary
- Asad Laher, Head of Governance and Legal
- Phil Llewellyn, Corporate and Democratic Lead

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair, Councillor Alistair Bradley welcomed all to the meeting, in particular the new Independent Co-opted Member, Mimi-El-Khattan, and advised how the remote meeting would operate. Apologies had been received from Councillors Robert Rigby, Thomas Threlfall and Ivan Taylor.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th September 2020

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th September 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

4. Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

5. Recruitment of Chief Constable

The PCC verbally updated the Panel on the delayed recruitment process for the appointment of a new Chief Constable, which had been impacted by Covid-19, but could now continue. There were 5 exceptional candidates, with final interviews being held on 22nd December, and a Confirmation Hearing on 18th January 2021.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

6. Confirmation Hearings

A report was submitted that outlined the Confirmation Hearing process for the appointment of a new Chief Constable.

The Police and Crime Panel in order to carry out this function would meet for a Confirmation Hearing on the 18th January 2021. Prior to this, a private pre meeting for all members of the Panel will be held at 5.30 pm on 12th January 2021.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

7. Appointment of Independent Co-opted Members

The Secretary reminded Members that there remained a vacancy on the Panel, for the appointment of an Independent Co-opted Member, following the recent recruitment process, where Mimi- El-Khattan had been appointed.

Following discussion, the Panel concluded that rather than wait three months and advertise again, that the recruitment process commence as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – That the Secretary be requested to commence the recruitment process for another Independent Co-opted Member.

8. Performance Monitoring Report

The Commissioner presented his latest report, and particularly highlighted the Chancellor's recent Spending Review Statement, referencing the Public Sector Pay Freeze, additional £400m for recruitment of additional police officers nationally, and

that PCCs would be able to increase Council Tax on a Band D property by £15 without the requirement for a local referendum, which was an option he would have to consider.

The Commissioner received a number of questions and statements on his report, including the need to carefully consider applying the £15 increase on Council Tax, clarity on whether improved call performance for 101 calls was Covid related and had call volumes altered during the various lockdowns, the success of Virtual Pods, the impact on Courts, victims and witnesses as a result of Covid, in particular rape cases, concerns about a rise in Domestic Violence as a result of Covid, use of the £400m for extra officers and the current position relating to PCSOs and their importance.

The Commissioner in response advised that in terms of improved 101 performance, that call volumes were fluctuating, and whilst there had been a reduction in traditional crime, that there had been more ASB and Covid incidents, and that 999 calls remained a priority, but that improvements to the digital platform had also helped improve call wait times and customer experience. The move to Pods had let to more efficient and effective working and was considered a success. The Court system had been affected by Covid, and Nightingale Courts were dealing with the backlog, and the PCC outlined the work of Local Victim Services, the Police and the Criminal Justice System in supporting victims and witnesses, and work with CPS relating to rape cases. The Commissioner shared concerns about a spike in Domestic Violence due to Covid, figures did not show an impact at present, but it could be a longer term issue, and working with Local Victim Services and the Police, people would be encouraged to come forward if they were experiencing issues. In terms of the additional funding for Police Officers, Lancashire's share would be 150 officers, with a further 150 the year after, and there would be no spare funding to assist the budget in other areas. In relation to PCSOs, the PCC commented on their invaluable role and they would be protected as much as possible, but any reductions had been down to part funding being withdrawn by local councils as part of budget reductions, and that this area could be further discussed at the Finance Seminar on 9th December.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

9. Emergency Services Network

The Panel considered a report on options for scrutiny of the Emergency Services Network, following an article on this matter by Evan Morris, Vice Chairman of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels (NAPFCP).

It was suggested that if the Panel wished to scrutinise this area that this should be completed quickly in order that the Panel could better understand this area prior to scrutinising the PCCs budget proposals. Two options were presented, firstly to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the matter, or secondly, to have a full Panel briefing session in early January 2021.

RESOLVED – That a full Panel briefing session be organised for early January 2021.

10. Independent Reviews of Deaths and Serious Incidents

A report was submitted asking Members to consider how it wanted to scrutinise the work of the PCC in relation to custody and how he held the Chief Constable to account for the operational running of custody. An independent review of this area had reported in January 2017, which referenced PCCs statutory role in this regard.

The NAPFCP had suggested that this was an area Panels may wish to scrutinise and the Panel was asked if it wished to set up a short term Task and Finish Group to scrutinise this area.

RESOLVED – That interested Panel Members or substitutes join the Task and Finish Group, which would report back in March 2021, and that the Forward Plan be updated accordingly.

11. Covid Action and Recovery

The Panel received a report providing Members of the Panel with an update in relation to the impact of the Covid pandemic and the Constabulary's Recovery Plan.

Overall, there was a decreasing trend in overall recorded crime in Lancashire, in line with national trends since the start of the Pandemic, with an increase in ASB related incidents.

The report also detailed the Covid related absence approach to support staff and officers, as well as the Enforcement Plan and Recovery Plan.

In response to a question on the enforcement action taken by the Police in terms of people self-isolating, the Commissioner advised that enforcement was the last resort, as the Police did not have the capacity to fully enforce such an area, instead the focus was on enforcement of large gatherings. The approach in Lancashire had been to follow the four Es; Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce.

The Commissioner agreed to circulate any figures available of Police activity around enforcement of self-isolation.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

12. PCC Decisions

A report was submitted on decisions made by the Commissioner and the Director since the last meeting of the Panel on 16th September 2020.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

13. Forward Plan and Task and Finish Groups

The Secretary updated the Panel on the progress of the Task and Finish Groups, with the Local & Neighbourhood Policing Strategy and Police Response Team Groups up and running, with additional support from an officer at BwDBC, and that the remaining groups – Violence Reduction Network and Building Confidence in Local Communities would commence work in the New Year.

All the Task and Finish Groups were now due to report back to the Panel in March 2021, so the Secretary advised that he would update the Forward Plan accordingly.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that the Forward Plan be updated to reflect that all Task and Finish Groups would report back now in March 2021.

14. 9th Annual Police and Crime Panel Conference November 2020

The Panel received an update on the 9th Annual Police and Crime Panel Conference that had been held virtually over 3 days in November and was attended by the Chair, Vice Chair, Cllr Peter LeMarinel and officers David Fairclough, Asad Laher and Phil Llewellyn. Members and officers fed back on workshops attended and of the examples of national good practice that could be followed in Lancashire.

It was noted that the benefit of the Virtual arrangement had been that more Members and officers could attend and be join workshops of interest, but there were drawbacks too in terms of holding such an event virtually rather than in person.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

15. Annual Finance Briefing – 5.30pm Wednesday 9th December 2020

Members were encouraged to attend the Annual Finance Briefing that would be delivered by Steve Freeman and would help in carrying out scrutiny of the PCCs proposed budget proposals.

16. Monitoring of Complaints

The Panel received a report which set out the current position with regard to communications relating to potential complaints received up to 23rd November 2020 in relation to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Since the last meeting there had been four further communications (83), (84), (85) and (86) and these was again related to the alleged conduct of a police officer or the conduct of individual police investigations for which there are other complaints processes and/or, appropriate authorities to deal with such matters.

There have been no further complaints received up to the 23rd November 2020.

RESOLVED - That the update in relation to communications and complaints be noted.

17. Webcasting Panel Meetings

The Panel received a report requesting approval for the procurement of webcasting services from Auditel for the next five meetings in order that Members could join meetings of the Panel without issue and to enable meetings to be broadcast live in order that members of the public could watch Panel meetings.

The report outlined issues experienced by some Members in joining meetings of the Panel that had been held using MS Teams Live Events - there had been challenges in arranging remote public meetings involving 15 different Council configurations/licences/firewalls/setups at such short notice whilst all Councils were also prioritising other Covid response activities. Arrangements had been made for the meeting on 7th December to be held via 'normal' Teams, which would enable all to join the meeting, even if their authority had not implemented the full Teams solution yet.

Arrangements with the Council's partner, Auditel, were made to broadcast the meeting at a one off cost of £495 and the Home Office funding utilised for this purpose, and if this was considered successful at today's meeting provided the option for continuing this arrangement for several meetings whilst meetings were required to be held remotely, at a cost of £395 per meeting if five meetings were booked in advance.

Given the time spent to date on remote meetings by Officers of the Host Authority and also Members of the Panel in engaging in tests and communication, it was considered a necessary solution to the issues of engagement to date. Additionally, as Hybrid meetings were likely to be held in the near future, and webcasting would be required for this, it was necessary to have a process to enable this going forwards.

RESOLVED – That the procurement of webcasting services from Auditel for the next five meetings be approved, after which time the position be reviewed.

18. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

19. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair outlined arrangements for the forthcoming meetings of the Panel: Confirmation Hearing to take place at 5pm on 18th January 2021.

Scheduled Panel Meeting on 18th January 2021 moved to 2nd February 2021 at 10am (the 'spare' meeting date scheduled in case the Precept is not agreed).

The 'spare' meeting now scheduled for 5.30pm on 15th February 2021.

Signed.....Chair
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