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MEETING OF HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

Thursday 25 July 2024 – 6 pm

Broxbourne Council
Bishops' College,
Churchgate, Cheshunt
Hertfordshire EN8 9XQ

Please note these minutes are a summary of the discussion and are not intended to be verbatim.

MINUTES

Members Present:

Cllr A Curtis	Broxbourne Borough Council (Chair)
Dr M Ramsay	Independent Member (Vice Chair)
Cllr A Scarth	Three Rivers District Council
Cllr R Ranger	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr T Plater	Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr A Dychton	Watford Borough Council
Cllr V Bryant	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr H Green	Hertsmere Borough Council (substitution for Cllr Gray)

Also Present

Mr Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Police and Crime Commissioner
 Dr Amie Birkhamshaw, Deputy Chief Executive PCC
 Mrs Nathalie Boateng, Clerk to the PCP
 Mr Ibrahim Balta, Deputy Clerk to the PCP
 Mr Elliot Free, Legal Apprentice, Broxbourne Council

1 WELCOME

The Clerk welcomed everyone to the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel meeting.

2 APPOINTMENT OF THE PCP CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Cllr Curtis - voted in by the Panel as the PCP Chair.
 Dr Ramsay - voted in by the Panel as the PCP Vice Chair.

3 CONFIRMATION OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER

The Panel confirmed Dr Ramsay as the Panel's independent member.

4 APOLOGIES

Cllrs Chesterman, Gray, Pringle, Sherlock (who attended online) and Townsend.

5 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chair welcomed the new members to the Panel.

6 INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER, his approach to the role, including the online accountability sessions with the Chief Constable and reduced interaction with county council.

Summary of the response from the PCC: -

- The PCC indicated that Hertfordshire was a safe County, but we should still strive to do better for crime prevention and for victims,
- Committed to neighbourhood Policing,
- Launched operation Hotspot to tackle antisocial behaviour, which has shown positive early results,
- Committed to tackling violence against women and girls,
- Will use technology to reduce form filling for Police Officers, so they can concentrate on Policing,
- Implement a more modern effective way of working,
- Introduced accountability meetings with the Chief Constable once a month – online,
- Chaired Criminal Justice Board,
- Engagement work undertaken so far, such as, visiting force control room - night shift, intervention team, chief forum event, victim services, working through meeting the Leaders of all Local Authorities in addition to business engagement.

Cllr Curtis - asked about County Council meetings noting that the PCC will no longer be attending these meetings.

PCC – I met with the Leader and Leadership Team at the CC, in addition the Leaders of the District Councils. Happy to keep this position under review.

Dr Ramsay – I joined your online meeting with the Chief Constable, noted after the first hour the numbers in attendance dropped significantly, perhaps you should keep these meetings to an hour.

PPC- Acknowledged that 10:30am on a Thursday may not be the best time for public engagement. However, when the recording is online, some may go back and watch it. These meetings will be refined as time goes on. I will try to include topics of interest to the public. However, this is not the only avenue for me to hold the Chief Constable to account.

Cllr Scarth – in the context of violence against women and girls and the recent case, asked about making it harder for people to buy crossbows or similar.

PCC – indicated this was a live Police investigation so needed to be careful what he says. However, commented the public should be assured by the way the Police dealt with the incident, from the 999 call, officers were present within 6 minutes. Significant support is in place for the officers who dealt with this horrific incident.

Cllr Scarth – commented that drink driving was on the increase, is there a strategy to deal with this.

PCC – Acknowledged this was an important point, in Hertfordshire you are more likely to lose your life on the road, than through homicide. I am working on this issue with the Chief Constable.

Cllr Dychton - Congratulated the PCC on his role. Then asked a question regarding non-molestation orders indicating that they were difficult to get, the current process was lengthy which causes trauma to victims. Reference made to a particular case. Then mentioned incidences of antisocial behaviour leading to overcrowded prisons.

PCC – You make an important point about how victims are affected through this process. Indicated he would speak to Cllr Dychton offline about the case she referenced to see what could be done. Regarding antisocial behaviour PCC confirmed he scrutinised the Chief Constable about this.

Cllr Bryant – Asked whether Project Vigilant could be seen by reference to a Plan of Hertfordshire.

PCC – confirmed it applied across Hertfordshire, it is part of the Safer Streets project.

Dr Ramsay – Commented that the current statistical measures of crime are not fit for purpose.

PCC – Said he would take that away for future consideration. **(Action for PCC)**

Cllr Scarth – Indicated that it was great that a new HQ was in the pipeline, however this could be 2 years away, what will you do in the meantime.

PCC – HQ is scheduled for completion in 2026 and take up occupation in 2027. They will carry on in current location in the interim.

ITEM 7 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 8 FEBRUARY 2024 and 16 MAY 2024

Agreed.

ITEM 8 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Cllr Plater - noted that Lewis Cocking had been confirmed as the deputy PCC on 16 May 2024 but was now an MP, and asked whether the PCC intended to appoint a new deputy.

PCC – Advised that Lewis resigned when he was sworn in as an MP, under the legislation you are not able to hold both posts. I am currently not planning to have a deputy and will see how we get on but will keep this under review.

ITEM 9 QUESTIONS TO THE PANEL FROM THE PUBLIC

None

ITEM 10 QUESTIONS TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FROM THE PUBLIC

Hertfordshire County Councillor, John Hale asked the PCC the following question: -

“As PCSOs are seen as a valuable part of neighbourhood policing by residents for deterring anti-social behaviour, what steps is the PCC taking to fill the 75 FTE PCSO vacancies that his predecessor intended to leave unfilled?”

PCC – Agreed PCSOs are important, Hertfordshire has the 17th Highest number of PCSOs of the forty-three forces in the UK. While there may not be as many as we would want, Hertfordshire compares favourably across the Country. One impact on PCSOs is the part funding by District Councils, some have reduced their funding which has had an impact on the wider budget for PCSOs.

Cllr Scarth – commented that as we no longer have OWL, there is a need to get the numbers up for Herts Connect.

The Panel agreed to take the remaining items out of sequence.

ITEM 12 INDEPENDENT STOP & SEARCH SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair of the Independent Stop & Search Scrutiny Panel introduced the report. He indicated that scrutiny remained the core of their work, formed a data sub-committee, and increased their work on reviewing body worn video.

He acknowledged that the Panel were not diverse enough and indicated that they are trying to attract younger people.

Cllr Dychton – asked what they were going to do to engage more young people.

Chair – Introduced a communications plan including modern methods of communication (Social Media). They have set up mock panels in college. But, acknowledged they need help attracting more diversity.

Cllr Plater – indicated that Stevenage had the highest figures for stop and search statistics and asked why this was.

Chair – indicated he did not have the answer to this and would take the question away. (**Action for PCC office**)

Cllr Curtis thanks the Chair for the work of the Panel on stop and search scrutiny.

ITEM 15 USE OF FORCE SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair of the Use of Force Scrutiny Panel introduced the report.

The Chair echoed what had already been said about diversity in the Panel.

The Panel consists of 25 – 30 people, split into two groups, we review a small sample. We have a data sub-group who look at themes. 92% of what we reviewed we were happy with. If we see something we are not happy with, we feed this back.

Dr Ramsay – commented it is difficult to recruit young people as volunteers.

Cllr Scarth – suggested that it could be part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award to attract more young people.

Cllr Plater – asked how the panel decides what to review.

Chair – we pick a random sample.

ITEM 16 BODY WORN VIDEO SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT

The Chair of the Body Worn Video Scrutiny Panel introduced the report. The Chair indicated that they were the newest Panel, and only had one year's data. We have fifteen members, and we want to recruit more volunteers. She explained they look across the videos, reviewing whether the Police Officer put the video on at the earliest opportunity, adherence to Policy and level of professionalism. One of the things we have found is they sometimes do not announce they are recording. We look at themes or do deep dives into a particular area.

Cllr Curtis – noted the report had a lot of 'amber'.

Chair – indicated that was often because they had not followed policy, i.e. announced when they had started recording.

Cllr Plater – Asked for more information about the deep dive exercises.

Dr Birkhamshaw – responded that information about this, goes back to the District Councils for discussion at RAG meetings etc. Minutes from these meetings are on PCC website.

Cllr Curtis thanked the Chair for the work of the scrutiny Panel.

ITEM 13 DOG WELFARE ANNUAL REPORT

The report was presented by the Commissioner and noted by the Panel.

ITEM 14 INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VOLUNTEERS ANNUAL REPORT

PCC introduced the report, confirmed there were thirty-one volunteers, 113 visits had taken place, 614 detainees spoken to. Indicated they had appointed a new health care provider. In November 2023, the Silver Award was obtained for the work of the volunteers.

After a general discussion regarding the independent custody volunteer work, Cllr Curtis thanked all the volunteers for their hard work.

ITEM 17 – AOB

None

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING 21 NOVEMBER 2024