

Notes on meeting held in October 2019 on proposed and ongoing improvements in Customer Service by the Dorset Police Force Command Centre.

Adam Harold took the chair in the absence of the PCC.

Superintendent Parkin confirmed that he had taken up a senior role in the FCC in August. His aim is move the provision of customer service from a stable to improving position and for this Jane Jennings is preparing a 3 to 5 year business case.

The Superintendent explained that his team is accountable to a monthly Gold Group chaired by Assistant Chief Constable Julie Fielding which sets the strategic aims and future direction for the department. Reporting to the Gold Group is a Silver Tactical Group chaired by Superintendent Parkin which supports and drives forward issues from the Gold Group.

As agreed with the ACC, a 100 days plan had been prepared focused around the three main priorities for the FCC of people, performance and process. As a consequence of this a Silver Tactical Actions Matrix (STAM) had been developed broken down into different thematics in order to ensure appropriate improvement in business and service.

It was confirmed that the ACC is keen to see improvements in service delivery and efficiency, in order to do so it was crucial to gain a better understanding of the performance data.

The Chief Constable is showing a personal interest in the performance of the department and to that end the Superintendent is ensuring that performance is closely monitored through daily, weekly and monthly statistics to ensure resource meets demand. Consideration was being given to investing in a resource management software tool, which automatically calculates the resource needed to meet demand at any particular time.

It was pointed out that 101 call answer times have significantly improved since the last Panel meeting from an average of 20 minutes to an answer time of 9.4 minutes. It was acknowledged that the PCC had expressed a desire to reduce answer times to an average of 5 minutes with an aim to reduce it to 3 minutes.

At the same time as reducing call answer times, call handling times have increased. There has therefore been a reinvestment in Quality and Standards Processes to review and provide support with the telephony skills of call handlers as to how they manage calls.

A new integrated Command and Control system was installed circa April 2019. It explained that there had been some technical issues with this and every effort would be made to avoid an impact on service delivery. However as mid October the team had met the best 999 call response times with 86% of 999 calls answered in 10 seconds and an average answer time of 12.2 seconds.

It had been discussed with the OPCC Senior Management Team including Simon Bullock and Adam Harold the quality of call handling. It was confirmed that the statistics indicate that Dorset Police call handlers achieve 90% in satisfaction surveys in terms of respect and fairness in how calls are handled.

A business case had been produced for new VAS software which would meet the appropriate standards for call centres in the public and private sector and which would bring with it the possibility of improved efficiencies. The aim would be for this to be in place by June 2020 as part of the upgrade to Storm.

A comment was made on the Policy and Process thematic and reminded the panel that as a force, Dorset Police are bound by the Home Office National Standards of Incident Recording, National Criminal Records Standards and Crime Data Integrity standards. The Superintendent added that out of the thousands of calls taken last year an opportunity in terms of crime recording process had been missed on just 7 occasions, putting Dorset Police at the top of 43 forces in terms of crime recording compliance.

It commented on that the 100 day plan includes provision for recruitment of more than 25 new members of staff by April 2020. Evening sessions have been set aside to encourage prospective applicants; there has also been a series of workshops and job fairs focused on the west side of the county including a stall at the recent Force Open Day. Awareness sessions were being arranged prior to the closing date so interested parties can understand the application process and the evidence they need to provide to meet the criteria. Post the application closing date an assessment would be arranged to put applicants through a series of tests and choose the top candidates and the first assessment centre was planned for this weekend.

Work was continuing to attract candidates to Winfrith via targeted social media but the recent campaign had resulted in only 8 applicants. It highlighted that Bournemouth was proving more successful in terms of attracting new staff. The 3 to 5 year business case includes the opportunity to embrace Bournemouth more and the proposed upgrades to non-emergency radio and telephony enable the department to operate virtually across the two sites.

In terms of the Quality and Standards (Q&S) thematic, as mentioned above, action was being taken to reinvest in a Q&S assessment of all call handlers, together with managers and supervisors who are held to account for their teams.

A revised training package was being introduced for existing staff and new recruits with the addition of staff training resource. The training package would match the relevant standards for public and private sector. Management and leadership training was also being arranged for current supervisors.

The panel then went on to consider a selection of ten cases of public contact examples which were circulated to the panel for their review.

Finally, the panel note noted the terms of reference which now provides for the appointment of a deputy chairman of the panel should the PCC be unavailable for future meetings

Cllr Barry Goringe Dorset Council