

POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Cllrs Alasdair Keddie (Chair), Patrick Canavan, Louise Bown, Andrew Starr and Carl Woode

Present remotely: Cllrs Tony Trent and Louie O'Leary

Apologies: Cllrs Mytton, David Flagg and Peter Sidaway

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Simon Bullock (Chief Executive, OPCC), Marc Eyre (Service Manager for Assurance), Adam Harrold (OPCC Director of Operations), Antony Nash (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Megan Rochester (Democratic Services Officer), David Sidwick (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Julie Strange (OPCC Chief Finance Officer)

26. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th October 2024 were confirmed and signed.

27. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made at the meeting.

28. Public Participation

A question had been received from Mr Kevin Brown regarding the need for a Police and Crime Commissioner and whether a Corporate CEO could have been appointed to manage and address efficiency and productivity within the police force.

The member of the public was thanked for their question and the need for a Police and Crime Commissioner was highlighted. These are Statutory roles and the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 set out the need for a Police and Crime Commissioner in every area, with the inclusion of Dorset. The PCC provided detail of how budgets were spent and how they are distributed across the whole county in areas such as crime prevention and victim support. Ensuring that residents of Dorset were receiving best value.

No further questions or petitions had been received.

29. Monitoring Report - 00:10:12 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner gave an update on the progress against the Police and Crime Plan.

Priority 1 – Cut Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour – 00:10:05 on the recording.

The PCC highlighted the work currently being undertaken as part of the priority. He provided particular detail to the hours of patrols, stops and searches as well as addressing issues surrounding shop lifting and the initiatives to prevent this. Assuring members that they were making good use of the funding provided by the government. However, the PCC did inform the committee that with much regret, the Bobby Van Scheme would be coming to a stop due to increasing financial pressures.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (attached at appendix 1).

- Use of E-scooters
- Impact of the Bobby van scheme
- Use of drones

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to the support provided by the Bobby Van Scheme to prevent crime, the smart water scheme, traffic violations and road safety initiatives.

Priority 2 – Make Policing More Visible and Connected – 00:34:10 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority two of the plan. Identifying an improvement with the number of answered 999 calls, hitting above the target within ten seconds. The PCC reminded members of the storm which hit Dorset a few weeks back and informed them that it had increased calls by more than 50%, however, emergency calls still met the target which demonstrated a good improvement. In addition to this, members of the public were given the opportunity to ask questions relating to police initiatives through the inclusion of family days. The Standards and Ethics Panel had been chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and engagement strategies had been initiated during the summer months. The PCC noted the intelligence and importance of local community engagement which allowed for the correct allocation of resources.

There were no questions from the Priority Leads.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to engagement with local communities and community contact points.

Priority 3 – Fight Violent Crime and High Harm – 00:42:08 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority three of the plan, noting that the most serious of violent offences continued to fall, however, there had been an increase in the use of domestic

violence, sexual harm and stalking prevention orders. The PCC informed members that they were working to improve the service to victims and had sought long term partnerships to improve services and support for victims. Drug testing on arrest had also been introduced in Dorset which had concluded a 75% rate of users as the latest figure. Members were informed that the use of illegal drugs drives 50% of murders and theft as well as 75% of shoplifting offences. Driving significant harm to women and girls.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (attached at appendix 1)

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions, of which there were none.

Priority 4 – Fight Rural Crime – 00:50:50 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority four of the plan. He informed the committee that work was being undertaken to try and improve communication with farming groups, meeting with national rural crime units. The PCC also addressed fly tipping, providing detail of initiatives from environment agencies. He also referred to the September meeting of the Dorset Partnership Against Rural Crime, which had a strong focus against wildlife crime, work was also being done to investigate what could be done to prevent this from happening and the consequences which could be implemented.

There were no questions from the Priority Leads, however, Cllr Starr made a comment regarding the difficulties in choosing what should be a priority and was pleased to see that the prevention of wildlife crime had been considered as one. He praised the PCC and his team for all the work that they had done and continued to carry out.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions, of which there were none.

Priority 5 – Put Victim and Communities First – 00:55:23 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority five of the plan, providing detail of a refreshed criminal justice strategy which had made four overarching schemes; provide quality support to victims and witnesses, provide an effective and efficient criminal justice service, promote rehabilitation and promote confidence in the whole of the criminal justice system. The strategy had been refreshed to ensure that they met the needs of the victims. In addition to this, a youth participation strategy had also been signed to ensure a variety of voices were captured. The PCC briefly mentioned that they had undertaken a review of veterans work to see what more could be done and following a review it had been confirmed that the hate crime awareness course through restorative Dorset could continue. The PCC was pleased that the number of victims supported by the OPCC commission services continued to rise.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to the Youth Participation Strategy.

Priority 6 – Make Every Penny Count – 00:59:34 on the recording.

The Police and Crime Commissioner highlighted the work being undertaken as part of priority six of the plan. The commissioning spend was detailed, highlighting that it was on track and moving in the right direction. The PCC discussed emergency funding measures, informing members that Dorset was the second worst funded force, therefore hard decisions and cuts were having to be made. Members were informed that monthly meetings with MP's had been reinitiated and they were being urged to lobby on behalf of the people of Dorset. The annual safety survey was also discussed, and the PCC highlighted the importance of the continuation of the ten-year drug strategy. Members were informed there was a continued focus on safer streets and cutting knife crime. Lobbying continued on a range of fronts with a strong focus on improving Dorset for residents.

Questions from the Priority Leads and Panel members (attached at appendix 1)
Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to neighbourhood policing, Projects MARS, effectiveness of continuous lobbying of local government for additional funding, redundancy of staff and officers and financial pressures.

NOTED.

30. Child Exploitation - 02:07:56 on the recording.

Cllr Keddie commended the report and was disturbed by the figures relating to child exploitation.

Cllr Canavan introduced the report which set out the work undertaken to implement the 'Child Exploitation' initiatives across Dorset. The position nationally was concerning with statistics identifying worrying figures. More work is needed to try to encourage people to report these incidents. Cllr Canavan noted the involvement of young people and was pleased to see the work being done to engage with them. The Youth Participation Strategy was also highlighted, and comments were raised regarding how beneficial youth parliament had been in engagement to build networks. Cllr Canavan thanked the officer for the report.

The Police and Crime Commissioner was pleased to see that the subject had been done justice. He noted his passion for this area and sought to increase awareness through the addition of charities who support parents and carers to understand the signs of exploitation. The report highlighted that anyone could cause exploitation and possible sexual abuse, guidance of what to report is currently being worked on but will come back to committee. The PCC noted that it would be continuous work and hoped that the government would give a higher priority to drugs which occurred to child exploitation.

Cllr Keddie commented on the statistics and was reassured that Dorset was low down the league table but could not quantify the reporting element. The figures around drug use were shocking and underlined where the root cause of these issues lied. Cllr Keddie also referred to item 2.4 within the officer report which identified the 2022/23 figures where 1,070 child sexual offences were recorded.

Issuing guidance to members on how to engage and how to report would be welcomed by the committee.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions as to whether Dorset was using their resources effectively and the need to prevent early drug users and prevention.

31. Use of Technology - 02:39:28 on the recording.

Cllr Bown noted the potential benefits through the use of technology, however the balance had to be right. She queried how the PCC had invested in it to improve the force and asked for clarification as to how it was being monitored in terms of value for money. Cllr Bown noted that technology needed to be seen as worthwhile and not an extra burden.

The Police and Crime Commissioner introduced the report which set out the work undertaken to implement the 'Use of Technology' initiative across Dorset in the police force. Operation Edison was referred to from within the report which highlighted the enhancement of video responses. Members were informed that this did not replace officers, but it was an additional option which was better suited for some and had a quicker response time. The PCC highlighted that technology had been making the force more efficient.

Panel members were given the opportunity to ask questions. The PCC responded in detail to questions in relation to technology cost and maintenance. Members praised the robust and detailed report and were pleased to see that Dorset police were driving innovation. They were glad that there had been an increase in the number of answered 999 emergency calls but noted that work was needed around 101 telephone responses.

In accordance with Procedural Rule 8.1 the committee voted to extend the duration of the meeting.

32. Complaints Update - 03:02:44 on the recording.

The Service Manager for Assurance advised that there was one complaint, but it was not upheld, therefore no further action was required against the Police and Crime Commissioner.

33. Forward Workplan - 03:03:20 on the recording.

Cllr Keddie noted that members had reached the end of their Forward Workplan and the next quarterly panel in February 2025 would focus on a detailed scrutiny of the precept. Members were also invited to a workshop in January where they would be trained in finance scrutiny. A survey would also be circulated for the allocation of priority leads.

The PCC noted that Dorset Police had been working well and effectively and this was evidenced as anti-social behaviour and crime rates were down. Constraints made by finances were real, however, Dorset Police would continue to do their best to keep the residents of Dorset safe.

34. **Urgent items**

There were no urgent items.

35. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Police and Crime Commissioner Responses to Questions

Duration of meeting: 10.02 am - 1.11 pm

Chairman

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