

Monthly Assurance Meeting August 2020 – Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday 4th August, 10am
 Chair: John Campion
 Minutes: Charity Pearce, Assistant Policy Officer, OPCC
 Venue PCC conference room/Zoom

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Tracey Onslow	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Policy Officer (PO)
	Anthony Bangham	Chief Constable (CC)
	Rachel Hartland-Lane	Director of Business Services (DBS)
	Catherine Allsopp	Staff Officer (SO)

1.	OUTSTANDING MATTERS / ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD	ACTION
	N/A	
2.	<p>Holding to account Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI)</p> <p>The PCC opened the meeting by highlighting that previously he has focussed on all workforce issues but felt it was important to focus on DEI this time. This meeting comes at a time where diversity is a hot topic in the media and within communities. He acknowledged the responses to the survey completed in preparation for this meeting and that some will be unfair but that they are perceptions of current and former officers.</p>	
2.1	<p>1. Leadership and Culture</p> <p>The PCC asked if the CC was confident that the senior leadership team have captured their commitment to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion in the force priorities or Visions and Values. The CC responded that senior leadership also includes leadership teams within the policing areas. The CC chairs the People Strategy Board and the other Chief Officers drive forward performance. There is a disconnect between what is being driven from the centre and what is being pushed out within departments.</p>	

The PCC asked if the CC recognised why staff may not feel that there is commitment from Chief Officers. The CC and DBS said that:

- Confident that for the first time they have the conversations and connections in place but the proof will be when it lands in outstations.
- There is a new People Strategy Board with more focussed delivery groups and they are trying to engage with staff through the appropriate forums.
- DBS and the Assistant Chief Constables have planned quarterly review meetings across LPAs to include business services areas and not just crime and vulnerability. These meetings will allow them to address pockets of concerns that have been raised.
- The force now have everything in place that they need to ensure connectivity between message from the centre and what is being delivered locally.

The PCC highlighted that a number of areas for improvement have been identified in regards to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion including the promotions process and fairness at work. Despite making a commitment to thoroughly review these areas, it does not appear that the force have understood the breadth of concerns raised, or have made tangible progress in addressing these key areas. The CC and DBS responded that:

- Chief Officers are looking at how they reshape as a team in West Mercia and how they assess good in their senior leaders.
- Some senior leaders may be respected and popular on the ground but aren't prioritising work CC deems as important.
- This area is going to be challenging but they have made changes to the plan moving forwards. The current interim Head of People and Organisational Development has had to perform higher than her normal role and they have seen an impact as a result of that.
- The Fairness at Work activity is not being seen as a priority and has been lost amongst other issues. Work has been completed but there is a lack of clarity about what that plan looks like.

The PCC responded that concerns around project support individuals receive was specifically flagged by HMICFRS. The promotion review was supposed to involve stakeholders but there isn't an audit trail for activity completed. The DBS agreed with the PCC and said that there was difficulty with prioritising this work. The CC added that Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) had the same issues. The responsibility at Service Improvement Board (SIB) should sit with the appropriate Chief Officers not the DCC. He had concerns that the force rely on the PCC to highlight issues that should be identified at SIB.

The DPCC added that with an organisation the size of West Mercia it is important that messages get down to the people on the ground and asked if the support was there for them. The CC and DBS said that:

- As a result of staff turnover during the alliance transition this area is under significant challenge.
- They hoped to recruit in the new Head of People and Organisational Development role earlier but expect a far higher level of activity than experienced in the past.
- Chief Officers identified a gap where the promotion process and temporary/acting roles has allowed people to be in higher roles without completing the appropriate leadership training. Immediate leadership support is to be implemented as done in the past.

The PCC asked when he should receive an update that the appropriate resource has been applied and stated that OPCC can contribute to the process. The DBS said that they will have a work plan by the end of the month with an outline to show activity. The CC added that he wanted to see a living plan rather than things that might happen.

ACTION: DBS to share work plan with PCC in a month.

The PCC referred to the NPCC strategy and asked if he revisited in 6-12 months' time how will the force have made a difference. The CC and DBS said:

- They want to understand the experience of people and how the staff are feeling, data only tells part of the story.
- Positive action resource can look at different stages of recruitment to see what is working.
- Easy to have tangible measures so that every recruitment process should be more representative than the last.

The PCC added that he doesn't think this has been communicated within the organisation but that his Office is available for support.

The DPCC highlighted that a number of staff surveys have been undertaken but a lack of activity with the survey data results in fewer people seeing it as an advantage to complete the survey. She asked if the CC thought the data was used well enough. The CC and DBS responded that:

- There is a lack of West Mercia only data so they need to get more data to get a better picture.
- There is an appetite for undertaking activity and showing it has been done but not to truly understand why it has been done.
- The survey data has been used in the past but they haven't let the organisation know what they have done.
- As part of the new People strategy the force will undertake a 'you said, we did' communication plan and are launching a new short 'Speak up' 5 minute survey.
- Survey feedback can't be dismissed. Previously surveys have had an overall low return rate but this has been higher in one area. These results were actioned in the specific area.

The DPCC asked for timelines around the completion of 'You say, we did'

communication plan and the 'Speak Up' survey. The DBS and CC said that:

- The force have enough data from previous surveys to show actions following the feedback.
- Extra detective resource added is as a result of feedback from staff, provided outside of surveys.
- The 'Speak Up' survey is a short specific survey that will be completed this year with a bigger survey taking place next year.

The PCC highlighted new mechanisms to engage with staff networks and asked if he revisited in 12 months' time what would be achieved in terms of support and engagement. The CC responded that he would want the force to be able to demonstrate that views of staff networks are used in a more overt way and influence decisions. Fed and Unison now have seats around important decision making forums. They want staff to say they have confidence in the decision making progress, for promotions etc.

As part of the pre work for this meeting, a joint survey was launched by the PCC and the force to understand the experiences of under-represented groups of both current and former officers and staff. In total, 114 written responses were received and analysed in preparation for this meeting. The PCC highlighted a number of responses and asked the CC for his opinion.

“Supervisors do not understand or are not able to identify and deal with neurodiverse conditions. Rather than explore and offer support / reasonable adjustments, they are placed on poor performance plans / action plans and seemingly set up to fail with unachievable actions due to their neurodiverse condition.

If reasonable adjustments are ever considered it is a 'tick box' set of actions applied in their entirety to every individual rather than what is specific to the person's needs.

The force used to utilise external screening facilities for dyslexia which often picked up other hidden neurodiverse conditions such as autism, dyspraxia but now it's done by police officers trained to screen for dyslexia and the other conditions are being missed.”

The CC and DBS responded that:

- If there is a lack of understanding of a subject due to a medical term, supervisors shouldn't ignore individual but acknowledge the lack of understanding.
- There were a number of examples where student officers were put on extended performance plans because tutors didn't understand individual needs or culture. It made CC realise that maybe there is an issue they need to look into.
- There is a distinct lack of understanding about how to deal with autism, individually and within the organisation.
- They are working with a member of staff who has awareness and is helping officers to understand how to deal with autism.

- As Chief Officers it is about ensuring networks have the voice and bringing them in to help raise awareness.

The PCC acknowledged that it is only if it affects the officer personally that they may have an awareness of a subject and asked whether the training and support available to officers was in place. The DBS replied that it isn't. The CC added that over time the force learnt the hard way that individual needs may result in a victim or witness being deemed poor due to the lack of awareness of victim needs. Firearms training has progressed to include situations where people may respond differently to their commands but this hasn't followed for all officers.

The DPCC asked whether any other support was put in place for those student officers who have their probation period extended. The CC said it is a standardised process but the issue is if there is a lack of understanding around different cultural needs it could result in discrimination. They haven't trained tutors to recognise the need to be flexible to ensure the approach benefits all from different backgrounds.

The PCC highlighted another survey response looking at gender and asked the CC his view.

"I have been told upon joining West Mercia that I only got in because of my sex and since joining I have been told numerous times including once in front of an inspector that the only reason I got my specialist role was because of my sex. At one point my role was removed from me due to my sickness, the only sickness I had, had in 12 months was time off for an operation for endometriosis which is very specifically a female issue.

I have been sexually harassed and assaulted by a person in a position of power, who informed me it was only because of him that I was doing well in my role. I did not feel that I could report it as I did not want to be known as someone who complained and I didn't want that stigma. I feel very strongly that it is more about who you know than what you know as to whether you get on. People who have the right connections will be protected and others hung out to dry."

The CC and DBS said:

- Some of the responses are shocking and they would want to provide reassurance.
- Cases of inappropriate sexual misconduct will exist in all organisations but it is the biggest threat to staff wellbeing in West Mercia. There should be an avenue for all to follow to get support.
- This is an area of concern, they are doing some work with the women's network around the extent of sexual harassment.
- The new Strategic, Equality and Diversity Advisor, Jane Gibney is coordinating a Speak Up working group to understand how it can be tackled so that more people have the confidence to come forward and know they will be supported.

The PCC added that there appears to be a disconnect where the HR department don't see the link between Diversity, Equality and Inclusion and fairness at work. He asked how in the meantime will the CC ensure that officers and staff can speak out to put things right. The CC responded that they need to make sure these issues are discussed in policing area performance meetings with Assistant Chief Constables and command teams. Chief Officers need to ensure that incidents are responded to appropriately but this requires conversations with the staff networks.

The PCC highlighted another survey response and asked the CC what he would say to this individual.

"The racism has been driven underground and changed from the more overt nature that I first experienced when I first joined. We have Stephen Lawrence's sacrifice to thank for that. In training school I had my bed room set alight, I suppose that was the worst thing overall whilst there. The rest was minor in comparison.

In West Mercia the most embarrassing and hurtful overt event I have had was a white colleague refer to a convenience store as a Paki Shop over the air on surveillance, he is a high ranking officer in the organisation now. There are numerous other episodes I could cite but I tend to challenge it now and it certainly doesn't happen as often. The latest one was last year and involved use of the N word by a high ranking officer where everybody seemed to not hear it except me.

It is sad to say that despite the many efforts by the Home Office, we still largely remains one of the last old boy networks. If you are not white and talk with a public school accent you have little to no chance of making it beyond Inspector, certainly true in this Force. The funniest thing I have heard from Chief Officers lately (prior to this current interest in BME) is that 'we want diversity of thinking'. This is perceived by BME staff as just another way of keeping things white as possible.

[...] On a more personal note I have been held back for promotions and boards throughout my career to the point I expect it now. The only development I have had is that which I have sought and fought for, for myself. The lack of diversity in the ranks is not an accident or of lack of talent [...]"

The CC responded that although the context is relevant he cannot deal with things that have happened in the past, the service has moved on since. He can't understand how racism exists in anybody's thinking but they need to have open less threatening conversations. The DBS added that open conversations need to be encouraged so people feel safe having them and that it may be something they need to do with the leadership team.

The PCC added that he wants to be confident that staff are given the

	protected time to have these conversations.	
2.2	<p>2. Attraction and Recruitment</p> <p>The DPCC said that there are a number of survey responses that are positive that should be highlighted and acknowledged a survey response from a woman who worked flexible hours to suit her childcare needs. The CC responded that the experience of women joining policing today is incomparable to years ago. The role of the father is also better understood and the use of paternity leave is valued. The force need to be able to explain the benefits of the progress.</p> <p>The DPCC highlighted that the force have been unable to meet their diversity targets for recruitment. The force responded that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no reason why the force shouldn't achieve their target for a BAME workforce of 3.8%, with positive action resource. • They are confident about the numbers of BAME officers coming in and they have agreed to replace a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship course with Degree Holder Entry Programme due to higher diversity. • Concerns are around higher attrition rates for BAME officers and they need to understand why this is. <p>The PCC acknowledged that there has been 2 years of recruitment without this additional analysis. The DBS said the force are trying to pull together a strategy to ensure they are recruiting the right people. The CC added that he was aware of regional pressure to recruit internally via PCSO's but this would make West Mercia less representative.</p> <p>The PCC said that it appears there is miscommunication within the force about the priorities but that positive work seems to be in place to hopefully change this. He quoted some more responses from the survey.</p> <p>Example 1. <i>"The commitment to positive action is questionable - under representation is a national priority yet one member of staff allocated to drive this forward [...] Recruitment processes are outdated and do not lend themselves to positive action, and staff within that function (HR) have no understanding of the commitment to positive action and their role within that."</i></p> <p>Example 2. <i>"I have seen a lot of talk about inclusion and diversity, but a continual reduction in the resources & time allocated to achieve any of the actions linked to these agendas. we used to have a 3 person positive action team - it has since been tacked on to an HR officer's role and then 'allocated' to a police officer who is expected to reverse the decline of about 13 years of work!"</i></p>	

The CC and DBS responded that:

- They are confident there is something different in the environment that will create change.
- West Mercia reflects its communities and has the same prejudices, sometimes there is the curiosity that force may be afraid of. They need to understand where concerns lie.
- Supervisors may not be sure how to and haven't been equipped to deal with these situations.
- The makeup of the communities are everyday conversations in other areas of the country but not in West Mercia.
- Concerns that the force are trying to make a culture that isn't representative of the community they police.

The DPCC highlighted that previously positive action activity has been limited to one resource and this was acknowledged in a number of survey responses. She asked if the CC could outline how the additional investment could be used to drive activity across all stages of employment and areas of diversity. The CC said that previously there was a standalone diversity department that was disbanded in order to embed it across all departments. DBS added that the additional resource is included to focus on retention and progression that the current resource doesn't have capacity to focus on. The staff networks have access to funding and can bid for it.

The PCC highlighted that the current positive action resource has only been successful because of the person in the role as oppose to support provided to them. He asked how they will make sure future success will be as a result of support given. The DBS said that this role wasn't given enough profile, the new Strategic Equality and Diversity Advisor will feed into Head of Strategy, Planning and Insight to ensure it isn't lost.

The PCC highlighted further survey responses about unconscious bias and a low uptake in its mandatory training.

"The unconscious bias and racism is present throughout the whole system and it just slowly overwhelmed me until I felt I was not able to be the police officer that I wanted to be, it was affecting my mental and emotional state."

He asked if the CC was disappointed in the forces completion rate and whether the Executive Team had 100% completion. The CC explained that this isn't categorised under mandatory training on the e-learning software. The executive team haven't completed the training as the launch of this training wasn't escalated up to them but they would have received more detailed training in other forums.

	<p>The PCC added that if this was a priority there would be a process to fix it. The CC responded that he doesn't know if it is a priority for everyone to take it they need to define the target audience, they are having to retrospectively look at this.</p>	
<p>2.3</p>	<p>3. Retention and Progression</p> <p>The PCC acknowledged that the force are due to launch a new talent mapping programme and asked if the CC was confident it would be successfully launched. The CC responded that there are two parts of talent management process. He is confident they are going to be successful in the first part where everyone is supported to develop their skills. However, he lacks confidence in the second part of the process where staff are separated from their peers and managed to reach their potential.</p>	
<p>2.4</p>	<p>4. Exit from service with dignity</p> <p>The DPCC highlighted that feedback from staff networks and the survey responses suggest BAME student officers are treated differently in terms of the threshold for informal performance management. She asked if the CC was reassured supervisors had suitable training and support to ensure they are equipped to manage performance fairly. The CC responded that the assessors and tutors within training are the least diverse group of people within the organisation, as they are often retired officers. They need to ensure tutors have a natural understanding of standards that are achievable today.</p> <p>The DPCC asked if the force actively ask BAME retired officers to return as trainers. The DBS said she is not sure if this happens but there is an opportunity for the force to understand how this department should look in terms of diversity.</p> <p>The PCC commented that it has been raised at HTA before regarding the central team providing enough support and it is something he will revisit in the future.</p> <p>ACTION- PCC to revisit longevity of action after being raised at HTA at next workforce meeting.</p> <p>The PCC highlighted that 44% of BAME officers who left West Mercia Police in the last 5 year transferred to another force. He asked what steps have been taken to better understand this trend and how it will be addressed. The CC acknowledged that this is an issue, although it is only a small number of individuals he doesn't have the data explaining why. There will be some genuine reasons but they don't have the data to support.</p> <p>The DPCC asked if she's were to revisit in a months' time would things have changed. The DBS said it should be identified in an exit interview process. She has started to flag to the policing area command teams</p>	

	<p>when someone has handed in their resignation to ensure they are aware.</p> <p>The PCC finished the meeting by giving thanks to the positive action resource for their work so far. He added that he will be interested in seeing what has changed in the future and that the force need to ensure it doesn't get lost.</p>	
	<p>HMICFRS inspection programme / Matters arising from the Service Improvement Board (SIB)</p> <p>N/A</p>	
3	<p>AOB</p> <p>N/A</p>	
	<p>CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING TYPE / DATE / TIME / VENUE:</p> <p>Mental Health</p> <p>Thursday 24th September 2020</p>	