

## Monthly Assurance Meeting November 2020 – Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday 26 November, 10:30 am  
 Chair: John Campion  
 Minutes: Jackie Irvin Senior Policy Manager, OPCC  
 Venue: Virtual

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Capacity:</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Jackie Irvin	Senior Policy Manager (SPM)
	Charity Pearce	Policy Assistant (PO)
	Anthony Bangham	Chief Constable (CC)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable
	Rachel Jones	Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) <b>(Item 1 only)</b>
	Catherine Allsopp	Staff Officer (SO)

1.	<b>Outstanding Matters / Matters arising</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
	<p>In advance of the meeting the PCC had informed the CC that he intended to discuss his concerns regarding the referral rate for the Victim Advice Line (VAL) and West Mercia's compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP). To facilitate this a number of assurance questions had been submitted to the CC and a report setting out the CC's response had been circulated in advance with the agenda.</p> <p>The PCC began by asking for reassurance around the governance arrangements for VAL and was told that an action plan is in place. The action plan is monitored and reviewed at a monthly satisfaction and confidence delivery board which feeds into the Force Delivery Group. Areas identified for focus are then picked up at the local policing quarterly performance reviews.</p> <p>To improve officer understanding of VAL there will be some specific training inputs on local policing areas, this is in addition to poster, leaflets and other notices which have already been circulated. To date the focus has been on processes and procedures, the focus now needs to move to the how. Training will be on the empathy side and will be rolled out in the New Year.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to improve the measures around VAL.</p> <p>Work is underway to be ready for the new VCOP which come into effect April 2021.</p>	

	<p>The PCC asked the CC how he gets his own reassurance that the victim is always at the centre and that this value is embedded with officers. The CC responded that there is a reliance on each and every officer to do the right thing. Leaflets and contact cards help. Some officers will need persuading whereas the majority will do what's asked of them. Sergeants and Inspectors follow through is the thing which will make a difference.</p> <p>The PCC commented victim satisfaction for burglary follow up was at 58% and that follow up has been the issue for many years and asked if the CC was satisfied that the changes will make a difference. The CC responded that officers need to put the time in at the beginning to manage a victims expectations. Shropshire LPA is an outlier for victim satisfaction, the CC considers this maybe a cultural difference and that it not a whole organisation one, but its effect does impact on the whole organisation.</p> <p>The ACC said that one of the barriers to officers providing updates is when they don't have a positive message to give. This hypothesis is being explored and the LPA commander in Shropshire is focused on addressing it.</p> <p>The PCC asked if the actions would make the difference chief officers want to see in Shropshire. The ACC replied that organisational support from the centre was removing bureaucracy so that officers can focus on the victim and that there had been more localised scrutiny in the last few months. The CC added that victim satisfaction had been one of his biggest challenges both as the DCC and now as CC. For too long the approach had been to tackle the issues at a force wide level, even though some areas have got it right and there is something fundamentally different in the culture in the Shropshire LPA.</p> <p>The DCC commented that upcoming upgrades to Athena will provide an alternative option to Track my Crime and for VCOP compliance metrics.</p> <p>The PCC ended the discussion by saying if re elected improving the referral rate of officers into the VAL would be a focus.</p>	
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Holding to account – Covid 19</b></p>	
	<p>The PCC asked the CC for his overall comment before beginning the questions. The CC said that the force is still in the middle of policing during the pandemic, so it's not possible just to look back. He added that policing now is becoming the new business as usual (BAU). Policing Coronavirus has moved on from being an emergency response to being BAU and will still be in the New Year.</p>	
<p><b>2.1</b></p>	<p><b>Understanding and preparing for the potential and actual impact of the pandemic</b></p> <p><u>Impact on the nature and scale of crime and incidents.</u></p> <p>The PCC commented that there had been a step up in cyber crime during the first lockdown period and asked the CC whether the force understood the cause of this increase and how this has influenced the forces</p>	

response. The CC and DCC replied:

- Overall year to date increases were considerable but had stabilised recently.
- There has been an improved used of flags on the crime recording system so data is more reliable and also a shift toward digital technology and home working had been an impact.
- People with criminal intent have been able to do more, while at the same time some less cyber savvy members of the public have been forced to use more digital technology. Op Prospero has been successful in targeting more vulnerable adults with awareness messages and communications. The force has some good news stories around courier fraud.
- Care and after care is important for the force and PCSOs are undertaking follow up visits for Op Prospero victims, however not all the solutions sit with the force, agencies including NSCS and Action Fraud have a role. Action Fraud has a long way to go before the public have confidence that it's working.
- Digital forensics is one area that needs investment.

The PCC commented that offences including domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation (CSE) had not seen the increases that had been predicted and asked for assurance that such offences have been accurately recorded and that the force has not missed opportunities to identify and safeguard vulnerable victims. The CC replied that he was reassured. There had been an increase and although it's not possible to be confident that all victims had come forward, the figures were accurate.

The PCC suggested that lockdown may have made it worse for some victims and the CC agreed that under reporting may have increased as it would have been difficult for people to find a safe place or to leave. The DCC added that reporting levels had now stabilised and that the force is not an outlier on a national basis. Domestic abuse is becoming less of a hidden crime, it has a higher public profile and more people are having the confidence to come forward. The PCC referred to the perpetrator programme in Worcestershire, which is being expanded into Herefordshire and expressed his hopes for it to be everywhere. The investment in the perpetrator programme is seen as a positive.

Impact on services to the public

The PCC said he was pleased to see the recovery in OCC performance in the latest data and asked if the projected recovery was on track with that discussed at the recent holding to account meetings on public contact. The CC confirmed it was on track and the December milestone would be met. He added that Christmas and Brexit could be a difficult period but

	<p>these were being planned for. Concurrent events potentially pose the biggest challenge and risk. Workforce planning with partners is ongoing to manage this.</p> <p>The PCC commented that during the first lockdown the number of investigations had reduced and asked if this had influenced how these were now being managed. The DCC replied that the reduced demand had enabled officers to get on top of cases and show officers what good looks like. This approach is being instilled into student officers that they need keep on top of their workbook, keep updating victims and keep disciplined as it can have a really positive impact.</p> <p>The PCC asked if the backlog in court cases was having an impact on the capacity of the Victim and Witness Service Centre to support victims. The CC responded that it is a recognised as an issue both locally and nationally and is putting a significant strain on the system.</p> <p><u>Understanding and managing local risks with partners</u></p> <p>The PCC commented that it appears that the crisis has led to better working relationships with partners and asked the CC if he was confident that the force would be able to maximise on these relationships for the benefit of West Mercia. The CC and DCC replied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Partnership Executive Group (PEG) attended by the CC had been meeting virtually and was seeking to strengthen its strategic direction as a result of the pandemic. Areas where there are opportunities to strengthen partnerships include mental health.</li> <li>• Learning nationally is that Local Resilience Forums not only improve partnerships at an operational level but are also improving the strategic level.</li> <li>• It has been a great opportunity to improve knowledge, relationships, and awareness across partners.</li> <li>• Joint enforcement has shown the future opportunities the ‘one team’ approach can give to street visibility and enforcement.</li> <li>• It is likely that future public finances will be limited or reduced and so joint working on issues such as early intervention and prevention will be a more cost effective way of improving communities.</li> <li>• Although the PEG is a long standing group with good buy in from senior representatives, the feed from people closer to issues needs to be right, so that partners understand the issue and can respond.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Responding to challenges during the pandemic</b></p> <p><u>Changes in the police approach to enforcement have and the impact on public compliance</u></p>	

	<p>The PCC's observation was that much of the force engagement had been via social media and he asked the CC if he was reassured that wider channels of engagement are as good as they should be and that officers are engaging with the public. The CC said that all media outlets were used, but local papers in particular want to hear local messages. Local connections are being used such as parish magazines and local radio.</p> <p>Visibility of SNTs hasn't always been as good as it should be but they are also seeing good examples of SNT officers using social media to put messages out. There is a gap in the skills and confidence of officers which needs to be filled around media.</p> <p>The PCC commented that SNT officers all have smart phones but only a small number are actively engaging. The DCC agreed and said that the ACC is working on a service offer for policing, which is to be used as senior officers wants to see a step change.</p> <p>The PCC referred to the various surveys which still show police visibility as a concern, including the town and parish council survey. The CC said he expected officers to be in contact with their local council and is concerned that people still say this is not the case.</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC to set out how he is reassured that officers are using their enforcement powers appropriately. The CC's response was while there is never going to be complete consistency, it is the key message. FPNs issued do show a difference in application. It is for chief officers to ensure that any local interpretation does not override organisational interpretation.</p> <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that that the reasons for the apparent disproportionality in the issuing of FPNs is understood. The CC said in response that he was assured that while there is no evidence of a disproportionate policing style, the organisation needs to challenge itself that a disproportionate approach is not being taken. Monitoring is taken place. The DCC added that a disproportionate number of younger people were being issued FPN's. Telford has no disproportionality but has the highest number of BAME. Analysis work is underway and FPNs are reviewed on a case by case basis. The analysis will be taken to the next gold group meeting</p> <p><b>Actions arising:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. the DCC to clarify the timeline for the development of the police service offer</b></li> <li><b>2. the DCC to share the disproportionality analysis with the PCC's office in advance of the gold group meeting</b></li> </ol> <p><u>Supporting partner agencies in their enforcement responsibilities.</u></p> <p>The PCC said that anecdotally, the working relationships formed in</p>	<p>DCC</p> <p>DCC</p>
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	<p>Hereford are seen as good and asked if this best practice is captured and disseminated across the force area. The DCC said that the work around joint enforcement is being shared and is making a difference, although some areas it not so good. This is being addressed with partners.</p>	
<b>2.3</b>	<p><b>Supporting and protecting the workforce</b></p> <p>The PCC referred to the 10 obligations the force has implemented to ensure the workplace is Covid secure, and asked how the CC ensures they are being adhered to and are making a difference. The CC replied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clarity of message has been applied all the way through, supported by staff associations.</li> <li>• Everyone has a role to play and there needs to be gentle reinforcement.</li> <li>• The Health and Safety manager is carrying out inspections.</li> <li>• The force needs to maintain its legitimacy with the public and although there will be operational circumstances when officers can't socially distance, the public need to be confident that West Mercia is following the rules.</li> </ul> <p>The PCC said that the covid information pages on the intranet were really informative and well used including an FAQ section.. The CC agreed it has been well received and confirmed learning would be applied in future.</p>	
<b>2.4</b>	<p><b>Operating custody services</b></p> <p>The PCC asked how the CC is providing reassurance to the wider public that using alternatives to custody is not putting public safety at risk and the right outcome is still being achieved to maintain public confidence and was told the balance is right, both effectiveness and proportionality.</p> <p>The PCC concluded by saying that although he had used the meeting to focus on some of the negatives he had also tried to balance this with some of the many positives and asked the CC for a final comment. The CC said that it shows that all officers and staff have been able to step up and respond to the circumstances.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>HMICFRS inspection programme / Matters arising from the Service Improvement Board (SIB)</b></p> <p>None</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>None</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</b></p> <p>Public on the budget</p>	

	January 2021 – time and date to be confirmed.	