

Extraordinary Assurance Meeting April 2021– Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday 7th April, 10:00 am

Chair: John Campion

Minutes: Elizabeth Wydra Staff Officer, OPCC

Venue OPCC Conference Room with further attendance virtually.

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Elizabeth Wydra	Staff Officer (SO)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Policy Officer (PO)
	Anthony Bangham	Chief Constable (CC)
	Rachel Jones	Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

1.	Holding to account – Dorstone Unlicensed Music Event	
	<p>The PCC called this extraordinary meeting in order to discuss the force response to the unlicensed music event (UME) that took place in Dorstone, Herefordshire over the Easter weekend. The PCC set out a number of areas that he wished to discuss with the CC and ACC.</p> <p>The CC began by providing an initial overview of events from his perspective, with additional commentary and insight provided by the ACC who was present in Herefordshire on Sunday morning (04/04/2021).</p>	
1.1	Understanding the nature and scale of the incident	
	<p>The CC explained that similar unlicensed music events (UMEs) / raves had taken place in neighbouring areas over the last 12 months (e.g. Bristol, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire). The force recognised the potential for this kind of event to take place in West Mercia, particularly against the backdrop of national restrictions. The CC had previously raised awareness through weekly briefings and blogs. However it appeared that momentum / focus on this was lost following the most recent lockdown.</p> <p>Initial intelligence regarding the event had been received by Norfolk Constabulary on 03/04/2021 and had been forwarded to West Mercia's Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) for monitoring. Whilst the information suggested an event was due to take place, it did not provide a specific</p>	

	<p>location (some suggestion is would happen across the border in Wales).</p> <p>The CC believes that due to a lack of experience, local officers on the ground did not spot the signs or understand the nature of the event until the site had been established; putting the force on the back foot. Whilst, some officers would have experience in dealing with UMEs / raves from the 1990s, there was a generation of officers across PC – Supt rank who would not have such experience.</p> <p>The CC was clear that the learning from Dorstone needed to be understood to ensure the force was prepared for the future, particularly upcoming Bank Holiday weekends. The force will be undertaking a 2-part debrief of the incident. The first part will be a survey, and the second part will be a more focused zoom debrief to understand what happened, what went well and what could have been done better.</p>	
<p>1.2</p>	<p>Chain of command</p> <p>The CC was clear that in the case of UMEs/ raves, the chain of command needs to be established very quickly. A Supt has the power to get resources mobilised and will ensure a swift and firm response. Getting the initial chain of command and response right also sends a strong message to event organisers and attendees and could act as a deterrent for any future events in West Mercia.</p> <p>As the nature and scale of the event became apparent, a critical incident should have been declared and matters escalated to the Supt and ACC. However this did not happen until the daylight hours of Sunday morning (the Supt. was informed at 0630hrs). The CC accepted that the command was not escalated soon enough. Once informed, the Supt. assessed the event as a critical incident, the Gold structure was put in place, and officers, specialist resources and advisors were mobilised.</p> <p>The PCC observed that there appeared to have been a failure in the system to do what it should have in terms of assessing the UME as a critical incident and establishing a suitable chain of command. The PCC asked for reassurance that the force would address these concerns in quick time to ensure preparedness for any future events of this nature.</p> <p>The ACC set out that the immediate focus point for learning would be the OCC. The ACC stated that the Inspectors in the OCC needed to understand why and when such incidents need to be escalated. Chief Officers would always prefer to be notified at the earliest opportunity, even if it doesn't end up being a critical incident. The force will also be reviewing the policy and guidance on responding to UMEs.</p> <p>From reviewing the incident log, the CC has identified mistakes that have been seen previously including: a lack of a clear audit trail; a lack of understanding of the powers available to commanders and the benefits/need to escalate; and the assessment as a critical incident. A key part of the debrief will look at decision making on the day, with a</p>	

	<p>particular focus on how / when the incident was escalated and lessons to be learned.</p> <p>Action 1: The ACC to provide the PCC with a further update setting out the findings from the debrief, including any debrief documents and reassurance in respect of preparedness / mobilisation of resources, and lessons learned.</p>	ACC
1.3	<p>Response</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC and ACC for reassurance around the decision not to enter the site following initial calls for service (i.e. during night-time hours).</p> <p>The ACC was satisfied that an appropriate assessment had been made not to disperse during darkness. This was due to a number of factors including hostility from those on site (a bottle had been thrown at officers), the number of people on site (many of whom were intoxicated), the site location and means of travel for those in attendance.</p> <p>The PCC set out his understanding of the timeline during daylight hours. It appeared that the PSU (Police Support Units) from across the force were not deployed until after midday. The ACC confirmed that the initial request for PSU support was made at 0900, however the team did not arrive until 1300. Based on specialist advice, it was determined that further support was required and additional PSU support was mobilised thereafter.</p> <p>On arrival, and under the direction of the Gold strategy, officers had clear direction and objectives, which are set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A peaceful dispersal; • Minimal public health risk; • Minimal community disruption; • Intelligence gathering, (inc. identification of organisers); • Minimal environmental impact; and • Public confidence. <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that all available resources (including those from other Local Policing Areas (LPAs)) were used appropriately to respond to the UME.</p> <p>The CC would expect every possible resource across the LPAs to make their way to the scene; however, this did not happen. This may have been due to not establishing the appropriate chain of command (e.g. Supt. not being informed until the morning). However resources could have been mobilised by an Inspector.</p>	

	<p>The PCC noted that as a civilian, the timescales above seemed to suggest a significant period of time during the day without any action and queried what key lessons had been learned when reviewing the force response?</p> <p>The ACC went to Hereford on the morning of 04/04/2021 and viewed drone footage to get a better idea of what was happening on the ground. Specialist resources and advisors were mobilised and were providing advice to inform the Gold strategy and tactical plans. However, the ACC acknowledged the force had been too passive and the debrief process needs to be utilised to understand what happened. Initial view of lessons learned (prior to debrief) included: needing more and better intelligence; as well as recognising that young-in-service officers may not be cognisant of the threats of such events.</p> <p>The PCC was aware that the force had a contingent of PSU on standby to fulfil national requests for mutual aid, with plans in place to increase capacity if needed. In light of this, the PCC queried why it took so long to mobilise the PSU teams on Sunday.</p> <p>The ACC felt that the delay was in part due to the geography. However, the CC did not think the time taken to deploy PSU teams to the site was acceptable and would expect resources to arrive within 2 hours.</p> <p>The PCC set out the impact of visibility on public confidence, and the need to reassure the public as to the force's response to events of this nature.</p> <p>The ACC provided reassurance that local officers, OPU and dogs were on site (approx. 20 officers), engaging and dispersing attendees from the early morning, in line with the national COVID-19 enforcement strategy. However it was acknowledged that visibility of police on the ground could be perceived as not being strong enough prior to deployment of PSU. The CC acknowledged that PSU officers get a different response from the public / event attendees compared to local SNT officers and the force needed a much stronger response in this case.</p> <p>The PCC observed the importance of reassuring local residents that the full force of the system (i.e. West Mercia-wide resources) would be utilised to deal with these kinds of events.</p> <p>Attendees discussed the perceptions of communities in light of the response and the subsequent media coverage related to the time taken to shut down the UME. The CC agreed that in terms of communications, work needed to be done to ensure messaging reflected rationale for not immediately entering the site (e.g. an appropriate decision given the factors set out above) to ensure the right message was sent to communities and event organisers.</p>	
1.4	Action taken	

	<p>As set out in Section 1.3, the ACC confirmed that a key objective for officers attending the site in daylight hours was intelligence gathering; with a focus on seizing music equipment, identifying organisers and collating vehicle / driver details.</p> <p>The PCC asked what enforcement action had been taken. The ACC confirmed that a number of arrests had been made for drink driving offences, and officers had collated details of over 160 vehicles and 25 drivers. There would be retrospective work to enable enforcement of COVID breaches, with a focus on identifying the event organiser(s) who could face a £10,000 fine.</p> <p>The PCC drew the meeting to a close. All attendees agreed that the discussion had been constructive. The ACC acknowledged the shortcomings set out during the meeting and offered apologies.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>AOB</p>	
	<p>N/A</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</p> <p>Thematic on Review of 2020/21.</p> <p>27 April 2021 at 1400.</p>	