

Monthly Assurance Meeting April 2021– Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday 27th April, 14:00 pm
 Chair: John Campion
 Minutes: Natasha Noorbakhsh, Policy Officer, OPCC
 Venue: PCC Conference Room with further attendance virtually.

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Tracey Onslow	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
	Jackie Irvin	Senior Policy Manager (PM)
	Anthony Bangham	Chief Constable (CC)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Jack Taylor	Staff Officer (SO)

No.	Item	
1.	Outstanding Matters / Matters arising N/A	
2.	<p>Holding to account – Revisit of the 2020/21 Year</p> <p>The PCC had identified a number of areas raised at previous holding to account (HTA) meetings that he wished to revisit. A number of questions pertaining to these areas were sent to the CC prior to the meeting on 27/04/2021, and a written response was submitted to the PCC.</p> <p>The PCC observed that many of the answers set out in the force's response were tactical rather than providing a strategic assessment of current performance. The CC and DCC provided assurance that there was strategic oversight of the areas raised, and the HTA process. However it was acknowledged that some of the responses could have benefited from greater clarity, and greater emphasis of the views of the Chief Officers.</p> <p>All parties agreed that HTA was a useful mechanism for identifying areas for improvement and that to do so, all those involved needed to provide a candid assessment of performance for review by the PCC and Chief Officer (CO) team.</p>	
2.1	Confidence	

	<p>The PCC queried what progress had been made in respect of the refreshed confidence strategy and plan. The CC confirmed that the plan was refreshed in February 2020, but it was acknowledged that it didn't have the same level of focus or traction as other priorities such as victim satisfaction. The DCC noted that more consistent oversight and scrutiny was required to ensure progress against the plan which seemed to have lost momentum.</p> <p>The CC confirmed that public confidence data shows that West Mercia is in a good position, with communities that are confident in the services provided. The focus needs to be on achieving marginal gains. The challenges faced by policing over the last 12 months (e.g. flooding, response to COVID) have provided the force with opportunities to affect public confidence outside of the strategy work. The DCC was confident that the force had seized these opportunities. However, the strategy and plan are still appropriate to drive activity in the medium-long term.</p> <p>The PCC asked what progress would be made if this area was revisited in 6 months time. The CC would want to see evidence of the plan progressing, with appropriate CO oversight.</p> <p>Action: PCC to revisit progress against the confidence strategy in 6 months' time</p>	<p>PCC</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Performance management framework</p> <p>The force launched the new performance management framework (PMF) in April 2020 and work to finalise the lower level scorecards and products was ongoing. The PCC queried whether the time and resource invested in developing the PMF was proportionate when considering anticipated outcomes and benefits.</p> <p>The DCC was very happy with how the PMF had developed, and the benefits to the force in managing performance in a robust and ethical manner. The time and resource invested had been necessary due to ICT constraints and a lack of automation within current systems. The PMF has resulted in a series of good quality products that allows leaders at different levels to ask key performance questions.</p> <p>It was agreed that greater clarity was required regarding the products and timescales for finalising this work. The DCC had recently received a plan detailing steps to finalise the PMF, and was satisfied that this set out what the force was trying to achieve, why, and when.</p> <p>Action: DCC to share the PMF plan with the PCC's Senior Policy Manager.</p> <p>The PCC asked what the most significant outcome of the PMF had been. The DCC highlighted the increased oversight and grip of investigations, enabling the force to improve timeliness. It had also enhanced understanding and focus on the victim satisfaction journey.</p>	<p>DCC</p>

<p>2.3</p>	<p>Mental health</p> <p>The PCC acknowledged that progress had been made following the HTA session in September 2020. Given changes in the CO team, the PCC queried whether the momentum could be sustained to improve the service for vulnerable people.</p> <p>The CC accepted that the force was not where it wanted to be in September and was open about this during the original HTA meeting. Responsibility for progressing the approach to mental health was taken on by the then-ACC for Crime & Vulnerability, and a lot of work had been undertaken including a new strategy, governance and meeting structures. The ACC has since retired, and whilst this was risk, the CC was confident that progress would be sustained.</p>	
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Officer uplift</p> <p>The PCC requested an update on recruitment of the additional positive action post. This information wasn't at hand during the meeting. Action: the DCC to provide an update on progress in recruiting the additional positive action resource.</p> <p>The PCC queried whether the opportunities provided by the officer uplift had been used to improve diversity across specialist teams. The CC provided reassurance that the force was considering how best to support the existing workforce in terms of lateral and vertical progression. The impact of positive action had led to notable improvements at the recruitment stage, meaning the force was in a more positive position.</p> <p>Efforts had been made to encourage underrepresented groups to apply for specialist roles such as Authorised Firearms Officers. Such opportunities needed to be recognised and acted on consistently, and evaluation was required to understand whether interventions resulted in positive outcomes for the workforce.</p> <p>The DCC confirmed that the force had been sharing good practice with other forces; and was also encouraged by the active staff networks within West Mercia. It was felt that the position would be further strengthened when more progress was made in respect of talent management.</p> <p>The PCC asked whether aspirations related to diversity, equality and inclusion (DEI) were embedded across all teams responsible for workforce planning. DEI is considered during the Local Policing Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs). The QPR process is supported by the Strategy, Planning & Insight (SPI) team who track data and actions. The agendas are aligned to force priorities and themes raised through the Force Delivery Group (FDG); examining performance in a local context. Going forward the ACC will be supplementing the QPR process with a programme of reality testing to quality assure responses.</p>	<p>DCC</p>

	<p>The DPCC asked whether the force was on track to increase representation to better reflect communities. The CC was confident that the force was on track to being representative of the communities in West Mercia, but that success would be dependent on continued innovation and support from the positive action team. The force's aspirations would be reviewed following the results of the 2021 Census. The DCC would also like to increase the aspiration in relation to female officers to 50%, to reflect the population (current national aspiration is for 35% of officers to be female).</p>	
2.5	<p>Saab SAFE</p> <p>The PCC noted that a number of key performance metrics, including some linked to the PCC's budget, were no longer available following the implementation of Saab SAFE. The DCC agreed that the loss of access to data was frustrating. The resolution sits outside the direct control of the force (i.e. a systems issue, not built into the original specification), however SPI are looking to test possible workarounds. The PCC and CC agreed that certain data sets such as emergency response times were non-negotiable and clear timescales for resolution were needed. Action: DCC to provide a target date for provision of emergency response time data.</p> <p>The SAFE app has gone live and has been rolled out to Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire. The PCC would like the Staff Office to provide a demonstration of the app. Action: Staff office to provide the PCC with a demonstration of the SAFE app.</p>	<p>DCC</p> <p>SO</p>
2.6	<p>Public contact</p> <p>The PCC set out year-end performance levels for emergency and non-emergency calls. The CC was asked to assess whether such performance would meet the expectations of the public.</p> <p>The CC confirmed that emergency call handling had stabilised following the force's public commitment to prioritise 999 calls. It was acknowledged that the force had agreed an improvement plan for 101 performance and an aspiration had been set to answer 80% of calls within 30 seconds by March 2021. The plan was comprehensive and included activity to manage internal demand. The CC acknowledged that the plans needed to be refreshed to articulate how the force would improve the service to the public. The PCC welcomed a refreshed plan but would have wanted more proactivity around this once it became clear that performance levels had not been achieved. Action: CC to ensure the call handling plan is refreshed setting out how the force will improve the service to the public.</p> <p>The PCC asked how well the force engaged with the public around performance and managing expectations. The CC felt there were instances that the force had done this well in respect of key dates/ events. However, the force could be braver and more proactive when</p>	<p>CC</p>

	<p>communicating with the public around busy periods and impact on services.</p> <p>The DCC felt that messaging around COVID had been successful in terms of signposting the public to report breaches online. It was acknowledged that a combined approach was required; manage demand and expectations in relation to 999/ 101, as well as utilising improvements to online platforms.</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC to set out what steps had been taken to reduce internal demand on the OCC, how successful this had been, and what impact this had on wider service delivery. The CC acknowledged that the outcome of the demand reduction work was not set out sufficiently in the briefing note. The PCC was concerned that this work had lost momentum and visibility as the previous lead had retired. The CC confirmed that a new Supt. lead for demand reduction had been identified and was alive to the previous plan. The new Supt. lead had already identified a number of ways in which improvements could be made.</p> <p>The PCC provided anecdotal feedback in respect of automated emails sent from SNT accounts. The PCC had received one such email which contained minimal information to help a member of the public, or manage demand. The CC was clear that as a minimum, automated team emails should include officer names, working patterns, and direct contact details. The emails should be welcoming, helpful and supportive. The CC stated that these types of anecdotes were useful for reality testing. The DCC and CC both agreed that this issue should be addressed through the delivery of the Local Policing Charter.</p>	
2.7	<p>Victim advice line (VAL)/ Victim Code of Practice (VCOP)</p> <p>The PCC noted that VAL referral rates were considerably lower in North Worcestershire compared to other areas and asked whether the reasons for this disparity were understood.</p> <p>The DCC confirmed that whilst disparity in some areas of performance was expected, VAL referrals were within the control of the local area and as such accountability for varying performance was fair. The lower referral rates in Worcestershire were subject to scrutiny via the QPR process and would also be discussed at the April FDG.</p> <p>The DPCC asked whether the force understood why it had taken so long to embed the VAL service. The DCC confirmed that some good survey work had been undertaken by the force, and as a result, the reasons were well understood. It was partially due to a lack of awareness raising and knowledge of front line staff, as well as supervisory responsibility to check whether referrals were being made. This has been well problem-solved, leading to an increase in referrals to ensure victims are being supported.</p>	
2.8	<p>Response to COVID</p> <p>The PCC referred to the recent HMICFRS inspection report into the</p>	

	<p>Policing of Covid. This report states that forces need to assess how they might sustain improvements achieved by clearing any backlog of outstanding investigations. The PCC asked how this would be achieved in West Mercia.</p> <p>The DCC welcomed the HMICFRS report and confirmed that the recommendations already had allocated owners. Progress would be monitored by the DCC. Whilst forces need to look at how they can sustain improvements, they must also have due regard for the increasing demand that will ultimately be seen as restrictions are lifted. There has been great learning from the response to the pandemic but the crime issues are more nuanced than set out in the HMICFRS document.</p> <p>The PCC was interested in some of the indirect benefits that had been realised during the pandemic and how these could be sustained. The DCC and CC provided reassurance that COs are having these discussions on an ongoing basis and are alive to efficiencies and benefits realised, particularly in respect of working practices e.g. the time and expense given to conferences has been transformed.</p>	
<p>2.9</p>	<p>Victim satisfaction</p> <p>The briefing note provided an update on 3 victim satisfaction pilots that had been running in different local policing areas (LPAs). The PCC asked how widely these models had been adopted across all 5 LPAs.</p> <p>The CC stated that further evidence was required to confirm that the models had been embedded across all 5 areas. The PO noted that there had been a lack of clarity regarding the extent to which the hate crime model had been rolled out, and that this had been highlighted at the force's Communities & Partners Board.</p> <p>The CC provided assurance that the intention is to roll out the 3 models, however there is a need to clarify what has happened to date with the Local Policing lead.</p> <p>The PCC highlighted the discrepancy in victim satisfaction seen across the LPAs. The DCC is sighted on the variation in satisfaction levels and it will be subject to scrutiny via FDG.</p> <p>The PCC concluded item 2. by acknowledging the progress that had been made in regards to the HTA process over the last 5 years. It is a key vehicle through which the PCC is able to give confidence to the public. The CC confirmed that there was going to be a session on HTA during the CO planning day to ensure the force utilised the opportunity to show the best of West Mercia Police, and the added value / impact that can be made through CO oversight.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Op Navigator</p> <p>Prior to the HTA meeting, the CC had shared the bespoke plans produced by each LPA and Operational Policing Unit (OPU) in response</p>	

	<p>to the easing of lock down. The PCC wished to discuss these plans in greater detail as part of the HTA meeting, with a focus on night-time economy (NTE) and fear of / violence against women and girls (VAWG).</p> <p>The CC set out that the original brief for the plans was broader than what had been included to date. Whilst each plan must consider the NTE and VAWG, they must also consider the changing nature of how public spaces are used and adapt the policing style to be visible across the places where people feel unsafe. As such, the plans need to be broadened out to include the public spaces element (e.g. hotspot areas, details of foot patrols etc.) and this has been actioned by the LPAs. The latest iterations which had yet to be shared also showed more consistency.</p> <p>In terms of the impact of the plans, the CC intends to undertake reality testing to ensure the plans are implemented. The impact and outcomes will become more apparent from 29th April when the force will be able to monitor activity and an audit trail will be available.</p> <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that all resources (including contact vans etc.) will be utilised to achieve maximum effect. This reassurance was provided by the COs but it was acknowledged that other strategies and plans are in place to drive such activity in line with the force's priorities, e.g. through the Local Policing Charter.</p> <p>The PCC has provided additionality in areas like OPU (19 additional roads policing officers). It was noted that the OPU and LPA plans didn't feel cohesive and greater synergy was required. The CC had also identified this and would expect the plans to be more cohesive.</p> <p>The content of the plans varied across the LPAs. Some of this is right and proper considering the different geographies and communities across West Mercia. However, good practice had been identified in Telford & Wrekin in terms of the DEI, and the CC would expect such best practice to be identified and shared across the LPAs prior to the plans being submitted. This consistency should be driven by the Ch Supts.</p> <p>The PM noted that the Shropshire plan was focused on the more urban conurbations with little acknowledgement of issues in rural locations which could be a missed opportunity. As with the DEI information, the CC agreed that the plans would have benefited from more strategic oversight to identify best practice, and ensure alignment to the original brief; focusing on all public spaces not just town and city centres.</p>	
	<p>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</p> <p>Friday 28th May 2021; 10:30 – 12:30</p> <p>Meeting type and venue to be confirmed following the PCC elections.</p>	