

Monthly Assurance Meeting October 2021– Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday 21 October, 10:30 am
 Chair: John Campion
 Minutes: Jackie Irvin, Senior Policy Manager, OPCC
 Venue West Mercia Police HQ

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Jackie Irvin	Senior Policy Manager (SPM)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Policy Officer (PO)
	Pippa Mills	Chief Constable (CC)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Rachel Jones	Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing (ACC)
	Beth Bridges	Chief Superintendent Operations (ChS)

No.	Item	
1.	Outstanding Matters / Matters arising There were none.	
2.	Holding to account – Performance The PCC explained that he had agreed with the CC that any queries relating to the quarterly performance report would be dealt with via the virtual holding to account process. Instead the meeting would focus on the impact of a power outage on the force and Operational Control Centre (OCC) performance. A slide presentation submitted to the PCC in advance of the meeting to be presented in the meeting.	
2.1	Understanding the impact of the ICT outage The ACC provided an overview of the outage, outlining the impact on services, staff, the public and finances and the steps taken to mitigate the outage both at the time and afterwards. The ICT outage started at 17:30 on 6 th September and ended at 05:00 on 7 th September. During this time no calls were received by West Mercia's Operational Control Centre (OCC).	

	<p>Business continuity plans were put in place as soon as the outage began.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 999 calls were diverted to regional forces or further afield during any periods of high demand across the region. The calls were sent back to West Mercia by Airwave. However, at the actual start of the outage there were 14 incoming calls that were ‘lost’. It is not possible to identify if these were picked up by the diversion system, or if they failed. • Intel systems and ANPR also went down. This meant that THRIVE (threat harm risk assessments) could only be applied with the information given in the call, compromising the ability to assess the entire threat level across all incoming calls. • The mapping facility used by dispatchers failed, meaning it was not possible to identify the nearest officer to an incident and, if an officer had pressed their emergency button, the OCC wouldn’t have known who the officer was or where they were unless they had been able to call in. • Planned work in the SAAB incident management system had to be halted. • OCC staff had to create paper records and it took time to input these into systems and to re-THRIVE all incidents. • When the outage ended, not all systems came back on fully and it took 1 to 2 weeks to restore full functionality across all systems. • There was a slight delay notifying the public as organisational communications were also affected. The public were encouraged to use Single Online Home to report non-emergency incidents and reassurance messages were sent via social media to inform and update. • Service to the public was maintained • Incorrect media coverage blaming the SAAB system was corrected. • No complaints relating to the outage were received by either the force or the PCC’s office. • The OCC staff very much care for both the public and their own colleagues and the outage was very stressful for them, with concerns over officer and public safety. • Staff now have a mistrust of the system and concerns that it could happen again. It has also been difficult to incentivise OCC staff to work extra hours. • Some organisational training was affected as were duties management and Athena. • Communications, both in person and via email etc. were used to thank staff for their commitment and to give reassurance and welfare support was made available. • It is difficult to quantify the lost opportunity costs resulting from the outage. 	
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Recovery from the ICT outages</p> <p>A Critical Incident Management Meeting (CIMM) was established to</p>	

	<p>address the complex system issues, in a collaborative approach involving Digital Services and Estates.</p> <p>The fragility of the legacy ICT systems made the power outage more challenging. This was in part due to a lack of corporate memory. Once the reboot happened it took longer to restore all systems than anticipated. Work to improve system recovery time and to build more resilience is under way.</p> <p>A lessons learnt report will be undertaken and it has been added to the corporate risk register.</p> <p>The PCC commented that the CC had not been in post when the outage happened and asked her for an assessment of what happened and whether lessons had been learnt.</p> <p>The CC responded that tried and tested contingency plans, such as the 999 fall back system had worked, that the gold group (CIMM) established was working, and that the learning the lessons piece is to be done.</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC if she had an assessment of wider continuity planning and was told not yet, but that she had been appointed as Chair of the Local Resilience Forum so this would develop.</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC for her overall assessment of the impact on the public. She responded that Quarter 3 performance data and the confidence survey along with the lessons learnt review would provide an indication.</p> <p>The PCC asked what the lessons learnt product would look like and was told that a lessons learnt Board was being established which would have the power outage as a deep dive topic for its first meeting. The CC added that it would provide an opportunity for the business areas in the wider organisation to test their own contingency plans and that governance of the lessons learnt would be via the Board.</p>	
<p>2.3</p>	<p>Current OCC performance</p> <p>The PCC was told that the force had set an 80% target for 101 calls to be answered within 30 seconds by December 2021. An interim target of 60% had been met earlier in the summer and a demand reduction plan has removed approximately 1000 calls.</p> <p>It is considered that the sustained gains in performance were impacted by a range of factors including: ICT outages; system issues; reduced staffing levels, including a number of vacancies and; an uplift in summer demand. Plans were in place to deal with the anticipated summer demand and work is ongoing to improve management information to provide a richer picture of demand.</p>	

	<p>Police staff recruitment processes show high levels of attrition in applicants throughout the stages. Of the 411 applications received over the last 12 months, numbers reduced to 108 following assessment, down to 65 at interview, with only 18 staff appointed following vetting. Some targeted recruitment is now taking place, and apprenticeship schemes are being looked at. The force is looking to over recruit if possible.</p> <p>Remedial work in response to the outages is being managed through the CIMM. Before the power outage, pre-existing ICT infrastructure instability was causing some issues with the SAAB incident management system, which SAAB were working on. This work has been suspended by SAAB who are not willing to proceed until electrical supply issues are remedied. Part of SAAB's planned work is a version update, which will fix some bugs and provide a PNC interface. This version 6 upgrade, will start in February and finish in May. Wider organisational ICT changes are required before SAAB can move to version 7.</p> <p>Response to unresourced incidents is considered stable. Daily Management Meeting (DMM) processes are being changed to provide greater resilience at gold level and having daily management briefings will provide greater oversight and flexibility to move resources to meet demand. A 6 week pilot in 2 Local Policing areas commences on 22 November. The pilot will remove the Domestic Abuse (DA) Diary Car system and instead officers will be tasked to take proactive action in response to DA calls for service. The pilot will be closely monitored and subject to weekly scrutiny. All 3 Chief Supts will be supporting the approach and sending out messages to reinforce the approach.</p>	
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Progress against the Demand Reduction / Incident Management Plan</p> <p>The PCC was told that a review had identified an uplift in the preferred staffing levels. This would see 26 staff moved from 0.86 posts to full time. The uplift of staff to FTE will provide extra resource to cover peak times. In terms of vacancies, online discovery sessions to attract potential recruits have been introduced and to date over 400 members of the public have taken part.</p> <p>Taking and managing calls which should be dealt with by other agencies generates extra call demand and this will be the next area of focus for the demand reduction work.</p> <p>The digital desk went live on 21 September 2021. Since that date it has dealt with 7,190 engagements (312 per day). In response to incoming demand the force has sent 272 outbound messages of support and guidance. Unlike other forces, West Mercia has not seen a</p>	

commensurate reduction in the volume of 101 calls with the launch of its digital desk.

The PCC quoted the 999 and 101 performance figures for the last 3 years: For 999 calls (answered within 10 seconds) in 18/19 the figure was 87.6%, 90.6% in 19/20 and 87% in 20/21. For 101 (answered within 30 seconds) in 18/19 the figure was 61.8%, 19/20 it was 65.7% and in 20/21 52%. He asked the CC if she was satisfied with the performance trajectory around volume and performance and referred to the latest weekly data which shows only a 2% difference in performance between current performance and the week of the outage.

In response the ACC stated that over the last year COVID had caused significant problems in the OCC and the challenges of implementing the new incident system had impacted on performance. Earlier in 2021 there were positive improvements in performance and now it is important to stay focused.

The PCC commented that the current management information was very binary and there is a need to look at the wider data and expects to see a clear commitment that will demonstrate this to him. The CC responded that while demand levels are increasing the ICT stability issues remain, however the greenfield plan will have a significant positive impact on this.

The PCC questioned whether the 80% target for 101 call times would be met by December and was told that it would be achieved but not by December.

The PCC asked how he would get reassurance that the target would be met and be sustainable as he is seeking to ensure longevity and to drive performance for the public. The CC responded that it is a complex part of the organisation, and not a quick fix with demand and public expectations also changing. The force does however have a clear commitment to strive towards the target.

The PCC asked the CC if she was satisfied that the wider organisational intent was right, (e.g. providing officer contact details), and was told that the organisational leadership and DMM changes show the whole organisation is buying into it and is committed.

The PCC queried if he emailed his local SNT today would he get officer contact details in the automatic bounce back and suggested there was a culture of not wanting to promote individual contact details. The ACC replied that standardised team contact details were used in automated replies, which if used would receive a response, whereas if it went to an individual officer who was on leave a response would be delayed.

The PCC commented that he had funded the roll out of mobile phones to all officers and asked for assurance that there are appropriate

	<p>systems in place to ensure they are used and are helping to reduce demand in the OCC. In response the ACC said that work over the summer had rectified problems with mobile phones.</p> <p>The PO said that the force had put in place some innovative steps around recruitment and positive action and asked whether this was being considered in the OCC. The ACC responded that they were seeking to pick up the learning from the positive action work. In addition, they recognise the speed of recruitment is too slow and are looking at CVs as an alternative and also providing support to fill out the application form.</p> <p>The SPM asked if the CC was confident that the task not ask approach in the DA diary car pilot would succeed and that officers would respond positively from the tasking orders given by OCC staff. The CC said this would be subject to close monitoring and oversight.</p> <p>The PCC concluded the meeting by asking how he should play his part in supporting and challenging the force if the target was not to be met by the end of the year. He expressed his disappointment at the strength of the Chief Officers' aspirations for improvement and asked for a timeframe for when the target would be met. The CC agreed to provide the CC with a trajectory of improvements within 2 weeks.</p> <p>Action: CC to provide PCC with a timeframe for improvement by 4 November.</p>	
3.	<p>AOB</p> <p>N/A.</p>	
4.	<p>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</p> <p>Wednesday 24th November 2021 14:00 – 16:00</p> <p>Thematic – Budget Investment.</p>	