

## Monthly Assurance Meeting March 2022– Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March, 3:00pm  
 Chair: John Campion  
 Minutes: Charity Pearce, Assistant Policy Officer, OPCC  
 Venue: West Mercia Police HQ

	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Capacity:</b>
<b>Attendance:</b>	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Tracey Onslow	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Policy Officer (NN)
	Charity Pearce	Assistant Policy Officer (CP)
	Pippa Mills	Chief Constable (CC)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Richard Cooper	Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)
	Damian Barrett	Ch. Supt Crime and Vulnerability (DB)

No.	Item	
1.	<b>Outstanding Matters / Matters arising</b> N/A	
2.	<b>Holding to account – Investigations</b>  The CC provided the PCC with a briefing document on Investigations prior to the meeting and this formed the basis of the questions asked at the meeting.  <u>Deployment</u>  The PCC asked if the CC was satisfied that the current deployment approach ensures all victims receive the most appropriate response. The CC was satisfied that it was and said that the most appropriate investigator is assigned to a victim based on specialist training with clear policies and procedures in place.	
2.1	<u>Recruitment and Retention</u>	

	<p>As part of the budget investment for 22/23, an uplift has been provided for the investigations function. The PCC asked if all vacancies will be filled by March 23'. The CC was confident that this would be achieved and highlighted some of the challenges experienced locally and nationally. The force are exploring other detective entry routes and altering how the PCDA programme for student officers is delivered. A further update will be provided at the April meeting on workforce.</p> <p>The PCC highlighted data that shows 22/23 uplift will mainly be delivered towards the end of the financial year. He asked if recruitment into investigative roles was being done so at the earliest opportunity. The force responded that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan needs to be achievable but CC gave direction that the force need to be ambitious with recruitment timescales.</li> <li>• There are ongoing discussions around areas that might deter people from wanting to become a detective i.e. exams, cultural issues, shift pattern.</li> <li>• Issues seen in West Mercia are also seen nationally, the force have put steps in place to mitigate this including timing detective intakes in line with other recruitment to catch any officers that may fall out.</li> </ul> <p>The PCC asked the CC to consider disproportionality within the investigations workforce and asked whether that was linked to the environmental culture. ACC Cooper said that increased diversity will be seen in specialist posts as student officer's progress through their career. The force are looking to have targeted recruitment for detectives as well as uniformed officers.</p> <p>NN provided some additional context around lack of diversity into specialist posts and highlighted that natural career progression for diverse staff isn't always seen into these roles. She sought reassurance that the force had targeted recruitment underway. The CC responded that her Strategic Inclusion Board will launch in April and will pick up these issues. Inclusion is part of the force's new vision.</p> <p>The PCC acknowledged the disparity in investigatory vacancies across policing areas and the subsequent proportion of officers that had received accreditation. He sought reassurance that the service received by the public would be consistent across the force area. The CC said that ongoing reviews of investigations will hopefully find sustainable solutions to rectify these issues. ACC Cooper added that work is underway to prioritise recruitment into areas with reduced capacity.</p> <p>Historically, HMICFRS have raised concerns around the ability of supervisors within the force to identify and support talent. The PCC asked if this was a factor behind the pass rate for investigator exams. The CC said that it wasn't, challenges are linked to increased demand and academic pressures.</p>	
--	---	--

	<p>The PCC asked if the forces approach to retention and development provides sufficient focus on progressions, particularly from underrepresented groups. The CC said that the force are not in a position yet but decisions will be taken shortly around the approach to recruitment.</p>	
<b>2.2</b>	<p><u>Investment in Service Improvement</u></p> <p>The PCC asked what processes were in place to allow the force to monitor the return on investment of new posts throughout the year. The CC was confident that through existing governance mechanisms this was in place. The DCC added that the force are planning for the future and are implementing a service standard for the public.</p>	
<b>2.3</b>	<p><u>Wider benefits for investigations</u></p> <p>The briefing note set out additional regional funding secured by the force to tackle the impact of county line criminality. The PCC asked what measures were in place to sustain current operations if further external funding could not be secured. The CC highlighted that the funding is driven by national objectives but it is hoped this funding will target criminals at the source.</p>	
<b>2.4</b>	<p><u>Operating Model</u></p> <p>Following a pilot period the briefing note sets out that a new approach to domestic abuse offences is now rolled out and embedded across all areas. Anecdotally, the PCC was aware that this may not be the case and sought assurance that victims receive a consistent response across all policing areas. The CC was reassured that this was the case. DB acknowledged that there have been challenges in rolling out the new approach but clarified that the force are moving towards that model.</p>	
<b>2.5</b>	<p><u>Criminal Justice</u></p> <p>The DPCC asked if the CC was satisfied that the force are working with criminal justice partners to improve the quality of investigations and achieve outcomes for victims of crime. The CC said that conviction rates are good, the force are working with the CPS around challenges faced including court backlog and changes in file disclosure submissions.</p> <p>The force received additional funding from the Ministry of Justice until October 22 to help with additional demand in the Witness Care Unit. The PCC originally raised this issue in September and sought further reassurance that the impact on service users would be limited if further funding is not available. The CC said that the force were hopeful to receive funding from the MoJ but if the backlog hadn't significantly reduced by October additional funding would need to be sought from</p>	

	<p>elsewhere.</p> <p>The PCC highlighted that the government have recently released their CPS scorecard showing criminal justice performance for forces and asked what was being done with the data. The CC said that the executive team will discuss and it will feed through into LCJB.</p> <p>The DPCC highlighted that certain performance metrics for criminal justice have dropped after previously improving followed continued focus. She sought reassurance that they would now be provided the same focus as before. DB said that challenges around disclosure guidance and scrutiny applied by CPS have impacted performance. This is being fed through the Crime and Vulnerability Management Board, with the same issues also seen nationally.</p>	
<b>2.6</b>	<p><u>Performance</u></p> <p>The PCC sought assurance that student officers with under 2 years' service are provided the appropriate oversight and support to ensure they are managing their workload. The CC said that this is something being looked at as part of ongoing work. There are clear plans in place to rectify this issue but the force are not currently where she wants them to be.</p> <p>The force have recently implemented a new deployment approach for domestic abuse incidents, initially piloted in two policing areas before being rolled out. The PCC asked whether this new approach was having the anticipated effect and achieving outcomes for victims. The DCC said that it is currently too early to see the impact on outcomes, although an initial uplift in arrests has been seen but an evaluation of the pilot has been undertaken. The PCC asked to receive a copy.</p>	
<b>2.7</b>	<p><u>Athena</u></p> <p>The PCC sought assurance that a comms and engagement strategy is in place to ensure all staff and relevant stakeholders are aware of changes to the system before they take place. The Chief Officers responded that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CC is reassured the new system is more intuitive.</li> <li>• The resources needed to implement the change have been set out.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.8</b>	<p><u>Voice of the victim</u></p> <p>The force undertake a satisfaction survey with some victims of crime. The PCC asked if the current approach is driving changes within the force or whether a more innovative method needs to be implemented. The CC confirmed that the force are looking to streamline the approach</p>	

	<p>to ensure feedback is issued to officers in a more timely manner to have the most impact on the forces response and allow opportunity for service recovery.</p> <p>The PCC queried the force culture to seeking feedback from service users and provided an example where other services outside of policing provide an opportunity for the customer to provide instant feedback. The CC said that infrastructure required to analyse data and meaningfully use it would be large for this method.</p> <p>Further discussion took place around mechanisms that could be used to seek feedback and the focus applied to victim satisfaction centrally and within policing areas.</p> <p>The briefing note highlighted stark victim feedback from a recent mental health needs assessment. The PCC asked if there is a cultural issue that needs to be addressed in regards to how the force engage with vulnerable victims of crime. The DCC said that this isn't just about training there is an opportunity to remind officers of the reason they joined the force.</p> <p>The DPCC highlighted a previous mental health pilot that took place in Worcestershire and asked if this would be rolled out. DB said that this pilot was evaluated at the time and it wasn't determined to be efficient. The local picture has changed significantly with the introduction of the Integrated Care System and its associated funding and responsibilities placed on the health trust for mental health care.</p> <p>The CC added that investigations uplift and ongoing work into Op Reset will put the force in a better position to face issues highlighted.</p> <p>The PCC acknowledged the quality of the briefing note and time that had gone in to producing it.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>N/A.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</b></p> <p>Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May</p> <p>Thematic - Workforce</p>	