

Monthly Assurance Meeting May 2022– Meeting Notes

Date: Thursday 5th May, 2:00pm
 Chair: John Campion
 Minutes: Charity Pearce, Assistant Policy Officer, OPCC
 Venue West Mercia Police HQ

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Jackie Irvin	Senior Policy Manager (JI)
	Charity Pearce	Assistant Policy Officer (CP)
	Julian Moss	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Rachel Hartland Lane	Director of Business Services (RHL)
	Liz Warner	Staff Officer (LW)

No.	Item	
1.	Outstanding Matters / Matters arising N/A	
2.	<p>Holding to account- Workforce</p> <p>The CC provided the PCC with a briefing document on Workforce prior to the meeting and this formed the basis of the questions asked at the meeting.</p> <p>The PCC asked the force what benefits they could identify from the document supplied. The DCC said that the force were trying to be more efficient in their management of annual processes and the document could be used to inform other governance reports. They are using the HTA process to review activity and identify gaps in working. RHL answered that the process highlighted where data hasn't been as up to date as they would have liked. They need to keep applying pressure to the pipeline and recruitment activity.</p> <p>The PCC highlighted that the briefing document was too long and made it hard for him to pull out points and fulfil his statutory duty to hold the force to account. The DCC added that chief officers worked to reduce it size, they want the document to serve a purpose but more focus would help.</p>	

	<p>Some areas the PCC had requested be built-in to the briefing note weren't included and concerns were raised with the amount of time spent preparing the document by the organisation.</p>	
<p>2.1</p>	<p>Workforce Attraction</p> <p><u>Positive action</u></p> <p>The PCC asked if given the limited resource dedicated to positive action, whether the team had the buy in and support from relevant business areas to drive change and succeed. The DCC said that inclusion is now one of the force values. The CC has set up and chairs a new Strategic Inclusion Board with an internal and external focus. Tactical boards feed into this meeting to drive delivery plan activity.</p> <p>The PCC sought further reassurance that there is an evidence base to show the contribution made. RHL answered that she would like to do more. There are now two positive action officers at a Sergeant rank due to being unable to recruit into the position at a lower rank. The DCC added that there is an underlying culture piece setting a clear leadership stance around what inclusion means.</p> <p><u>Uplift- Local Investment</u></p> <p>The PCC highlighted a considerable reduction in representation amongst student officers in the last financial year. He asked whether the force had utilised the opportunity provided by the uplift programme to improve diversity. RHL shared the disappointment but said 365 officers are to be recruited this year and this provides a further opportunity to ensure recruitment activity targets the right places. Corp Comms have a plan in place, including how community events can be utilised.</p> <p>The PCC sought reassurance that a plan and timetable is in place for delivering the internal uplift. The DCC answered yes, there was a plan in place but the recruitment pool is currently very small so this is becoming more difficult. RHL added that she has challenged the ambition to recruit into some roles in a timely manner but to protect the front line the force need to remain realistic.</p> <p><u>Student Officer- Attraction and Recruitment</u></p> <p>The briefing note sets out a number of new initiatives to attract applicants. The PCC asked when these were introduced, how well they were utilised and what their impact on recruitment was. RHL said that she is asking for any direct impact from the team. Facebook is the most popular social media channel but it is unknown if this is translating to expressions of interest. This is now being tracked on a weekly basis.</p>	

The DPCC asked how long the step up and Recognition of Prior Experience and Learning (RPEL) tools have been in place. RHL said the decision has only just been made in the last 6 weeks to put them in place. West Mercia was previously an outlier amongst other forces by not using these tools.

The PCC asked if there were sufficient numbers in the recruitment pipeline to fill the planned cohorts for the year. RHL responded that this will not currently be achieved, the July course is full but had to be changed from a DHEP to PCDA course to fulfil this. The DCC added that it is recognised that this is a significant risk but the force are using neighbourhood matters and encouraging the workforce to share to drive recruitment.

The PCC asked if there had been enough support across the organisation to drive recruitment and achieve the uplift to receive government grant. The DCC said that there is a comms delivery plan in place but this only has the capacity to deliver one high level campaign for recruitment. RHL added that local policing teams are supporting the plan and attend community events to encourage applications.

The DPCC acknowledged that 200 spaces were booked at the assessment centre in April and asked how many were used. RHL said that only 160 were used but the force foresaw this and adjusted capacity needed to prevent paying for unused slots.

Officer Attrition

The briefing note sets out retention activity for student officers. The PCC asked what broader plans are in place to understand and mitigate attrition across the whole workforce. RHL responded that the recruitment market place is changing and the force need to look at attrition as a whole. They aren't sure why levels in West Mercia are higher than seen regionally but that there is no trend/reason identified. Work has been commissioned to look at indicators that people might look to leave and how it can be prevented.

PEQF rotations

The PCC asked how the force strikes the right balance between student officer workloads and the wider operational demands on the service. The DCC acknowledged feedback from student officers around online training and issues surrounding rotations. As a result, there will now be fewer assessments but will still adhere to professional requirements. There is a lack of consistency across LPAs in how student workloads are managed.

Tutors

The PCC asked what the forces position was on using final year

	<p>student officers as tutors. The DCC and RHL responded that they have done previously but it is not acceptable, the force policy doesn't say they can't be used but it isn't the force preference. The PCC sought reassurance that there was the right oversight in place to ensure this doesn't happen. The force said that cases were only for a short period to cover sickness.</p> <p><u>Special constabulary and PCSO's</u></p> <p>The PCC acknowledged that the force were facing challenges in attracting and training Specials and PCSO's and asked if the force were confident they could fill the planned intakes for 22/23. RHL said she has pushed the next PCSO course back to allow for a further recruitment drive to increase numbers on the course. Specials recruitment is being reviewed to ensure the force have a clear plan in how to attract applicants.</p>	
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Workforce Development</p> <p><u>Talent Management</u></p> <p>The PCC said that it was disappointing to see the force has made little progress in relation to talent management despite being raised as an area of concern by HMICFRS in 2019 and 21/22. He asked what systems and process needed to change to make an impact and drive activity. The DCC acknowledged this was an area they failed to improve, this is both a capacity and capability challenge. It took time but a new operating model has been approved with resources in place to make progress.</p> <p>The PCC asked if the force had met their ambition for all officers and staff to have PDR objectives set by the end of April. RHL said that the deadline had been extended to the end of May due to system changes. Eventually the system will change over and be more accessible.</p> <p><u>Talent identification- Student Officers</u></p> <p>The PCC asked once 'talented' student officers are identified, how do the force formally support, develop and retain these student officers. RHL responded that the talent strategy needs to be developed, there is better identification but she wants to understand the strategy for progressing individuals within each LPA.</p> <p><u>The LEAD Programme</u></p> <p>At the November 21 HTA the PCC and CC welcomed the development of the LEAD programme but acknowledged that awareness of the programme is low. Reassurance was given that a internal comms plan was being worked on to advertise the programme. The PCC asked for an update on the plan and what impact it has had. RHL said that there</p>	

	<p>had been a comms plan but due to resourcing issues it wasn't prioritised. There are lots of good things going on but organisation doesn't know about them.</p> <p>The briefing note sets out that the PALS programme was launched in 2021 to 'recognise talent amongst ethnic colleagues and give those officers and staff the confidence and leadership skills to improve on their performance' The PCC clarified that the programme was to identify and nurture talent rather than manage performance of individuals. The DCC said that performance was a neutral word and was not intended to come across in a negative way.</p> <p><u>CPD</u></p> <p>The latest HMICFRS PEEL 21/22 report highlighted that the workforce were critical of the CPD provision. The PCC asked how this feedback was being used to guide future delivery and equip officers with the skills needed to protect communities. The DCC shared the disappointment in progress made but was now confident the force would make improvements needed.</p>	
<p>2.3</p>	<p>Governance & Accountability</p> <p>The PCC acknowledged that there is clear leadership and governance in place but that activity is not always delivered at pace. He asked if there is alignment between workforce priorities set by Chief Officers and activity delivered on the ground. The DCC said that the pace of delivery has been varied, some things have been delivered slowly such as the promotion process review. Chief officers have taken a robust approach to holding people to account to deliver activity.</p> <p><u>D,E&I Board</u></p> <p>The CC has introduced a new Strategic Inclusion Board to be held twice a year. The PCC asked if the frequency of the board was sufficient to drive significant cultural change required. The DCC said that the frequency can be adjusted if required but that there is a huge amount of tactical delivery underneath. He provided reassurance that conversations would be ongoing between meetings to continue driving activity.</p> <p><u>Staff Networks Forum</u></p> <p>When reviewed at HTA in 2020, the force had no forum in place for networks to provide feedback and the relationship between the force and staff networks was strained. Now the force have these established forums in place, the PCC asked whether they were able to understand the impact they had. The DCC said that the force were in a different position, significant work was put in place to develop relationships with networks. They are now influencing how the force do business.</p>	

2.4 Culture, Conduct and Standard

Conduct, fairness and Standards

The increase in conduct cases has been subject to scrutiny at HTA on a number of occasions. The PCC asked if the force understood the impact the increase in cases had on confidence and trust both internally and externally. The DCC said that there is no comprehensive impact assessment but feedback from staff being more confident to inform the force of conduct issues is telling. Feedback on social media from members of the public is generally positive for getting rid of bad behaviour.

National and Local Influence

The PCC welcomed the VAWG 4P plan developed by the force and asked if activity in relation to Black and Ethnic minority communities has a comparable level of structure and pace. He referenced potential disparity in wording used in the briefing note around the death of Dalian Atkinson relating to “tensions within the black community” whilst the death of Sarah Everard related to “trust and confidence in the police.” The DCC and RHL agreed with the point but said that this was not intended, this was misworded and should have been spotted before the briefing note was submitted. The PCC sought reassurance that the force challenged itself around wider unconscious bias.

Speak Up Programme

The Speak Up Programme was born from an impactive survey undertaken for HTA in 2020. The PCC asked what impact this survey had and for some examples of changes driven by this work. The DCC said that it was underestimated how reluctant staff were to speak up in an organisation with this rank structure. It has had an impact but not enough of an impact. RHL added that there are still cases where people do not want to come forward, they need to reinforce the organisational desire for people to share their experiences.

Promotion processes

The PCC said that it was disappointing that the promotions process review had not progressed and asked if the force have a clear terms of reference with timescales for delivering the work moving forwards. RHL said that:

- This is a key piece of work in progress, but the force need a clear plan on what will be delivered.
- A contractor resource has been brought in to undertake work temporarily.
- The current process has been tweaked following feedback but they want to make sure it is the right process.
- The DCC added that he is not satisfied that there has been a

	review of fairness but clear governance process is in place.	
2.5	<p>Health, Safety and Welfare</p> <p>The PCC welcomed the continued focus and investment placed on the health and wellbeing of its staff. He asked what mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate the uptake of the many different support services. RHL said that uptake for some services was low such as PAM assist. The force need to review whether interventions are successful but also what determines success. The DCC chairs the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board where they review the welfare services available.</p> <p><u>Reasonable adjustments</u></p> <p>The PCC acknowledged that concerns had been raised around reasonable adjustments for a number of years and asked if the force was satisfied with the focus and pace of change. The DCC said he was not satisfied and recognised that the force need to do more. This has been introduced as an area of focus for the Strategic Inclusion Board and there is now clear ownership. All student officers are now also screened for dyslexia to ensure any required kit can be delivered in a timely manner.</p>	
3.	<p>AOB</p> <p>N/A.</p>	
4.	<p>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue:</p> <p>Thursday 26th May</p> <p>Thematic – HMICFRS PEEL 21/22</p>	