

## Monthly Assurance Meeting July 2022– Meeting Notes

Date: Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 14:00pm  
 Chair: John Campion  
 Minutes: Natasha Noorbakhsh, 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)
	Rachel Jones	Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

No.	Item	
1.	<b>Outstanding Matters / Matters arising</b> N/A	
2.	<b>Holding to account- Connecting with communities</b>  The CC provided the PCC with a briefing document prior to the meeting and this formed the basis of the questions asked at the meeting.  The PCC was pleased that the briefing note addressed all of the points set out in the Terms of Reference (TOR) he had set and included the voice of the Executive. However it was noted that the document was too long. The CC felt that the length of the briefing note reflected the breadth of information that had been included within the TOR.	
2.1	<b>Ensuring all communities have a voice that is heard within policing</b>  <u>Corporate Communications Strategy</u>  The PCC queried how the new Corporate Communications Strategy had been communicated to the wider workforce. The Strategy has	

	<p>been launched via the Executive and will be rolled out to Chief Inspectors, as well as bottom up, through Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) briefings and Plan on a Page events. There isn't an expectation for front line officers to be aware of the internal strategy but they should understand how the force engages with communities.</p> <p>There has been very good leadership over the Corporate Communication team over the last 6-9 months which has led to notable improvements. There has been a definite change around proactivity as well as stylistically.</p> <p>The PCC noted that the Corporate Communications team continue to carry vacancies. The PCC asked for confirmation that the 2 Communication officers focussed on local policing, community confidence and prevention were in post and providing support to local policing. <b>Action: CC to check the status of the 2 posts and notify the PCC.</b></p> <p>There are currently 4 vacancies in the team (20% vacancy rate). The team is relatively small compared to other forces. It was confirmed that all the vacancies in the team were deemed a priority to fill. Chief Officers were also looking at options for the next financial year to understand different levels of service that could be provided.</p> <p>The PCC asked for further details on the force's Youth Engagement Plan. Strategic oversight of activity across the Local Policing Areas (LPAs) will be provided via the Local Policing &amp; Ops Board. The PCC would like to support the force in this area where it complements PCC engagement activity.</p> <p>The PCC asked for the CC's assessment of whether the Corporate Communications team have been able to engender positive perceptions across the workforce in terms of their impact on communities and ability to provide support. The CC believed there were positive perceptions and provided examples of close working relationships with the command teams in the North of the force.</p> <p>The CC reiterated the sense of proactivity around sharing positive operational activity. The CC believed the Plan on a Page sessions had been pivotal in breaking down perceptions of the Corporate Communications team with local officers and staff. The sessions allowed Chief Officers to review feedback and provided an opportunity to explain some of the challenges being faced by central support services. This has led to more confidence from the workforce about West Mercia's future.</p>	CC
2.2	<p><b>Ensuring all communities can access their police service quickly and conveniently</b></p> <p><u>Public confidence</u></p>	

	<p>The PCC's budget for 22/23 included an uplift within the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs). The CC was considering whether 5 of those posts should be converted from PC posts to Sergeants posts. The CC confirmed that a decision had yet to be taken. This was dependant on on-going front line stabilisation and work force planning work. This work and the associated Critical Incident Management Meetings (CIMMS) will enable the force to identify where additional resources need to go with a decision anticipated by the end of August.</p> <p>The PCC asked how the CC would ensure the uplift of officers over the last 3 years would be felt on the frontline and within communities.</p> <p>There was anecdotal feedback that the benefits were being felt on local shifts. The ongoing operational resourcing piece in terms of detectives and looking at medium / long-term front-line stabilisation will help the force quantify the anecdotal feedback. It was acknowledged by the CC that there would be resourcing challenges over the next 6-8 weeks. It was projected that resource availability would improve in November. This is when teams and communities should feel the biggest difference in terms of visibility and accessibility.</p> <p>The PCC was disappointed that the force was unable to recruit enough numbers to the PCSO course in May. As a result, the PCC queried whether the force's plan to maintain PCSO numbers was achievable.</p> <p>Engagement activity to fill vacancies has been ongoing and the CC was equally disappointed that the PCSO course was not full. The force is exploring opportunities to improve recruitment of PCSOs including visits from the CC, community events, a force event to celebrate 20 years of PCSOs in 2023, longer-terms aspirations around PCSO supervisors, and exploring options to recognise prior experiential learning (RPEL) to support PCSOs to become student officers. The CC remained confident that activity was in place to fill critical PCSO roles.</p> <p>It was the PCC's contention that a lot of the visible presence in communities was provided via PCSOs. The CC was asked what the acceptable vacancy rate was for PCSOs. The CC's aspiration is for 0% vacancy rate as each SNT is set up specific to communities. The CC confirmed that the current vacancy rate was not where the force wanted to be.</p> <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that the force would have a visible presence in communities over the summer months, given the challenges set out above. The CC committed to sharing a briefing note on summer presence to be discussed at the CC-PCC 1:1 the same day.</p> <p>The holding to account briefing note made reference to proposals for investment in technology to support visibility. The PCC asked the CC to provide further context and timescales.</p>	
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	<p>The CC set out a range of technologies including new mobile devices with Microsoft 365, new apps, mechanisms to garner live time feedback from members of the public following engagement events, and technology to enable better checks on delivery of the Local Policing Community Charter.</p> <p>Given the range of investments discussed, timelines varied. Some of the technological advancements were being delivered whilst others were subject to budget proposals for 2023/24. The CC believed the most significant impacts would be felt early in 2023/24 when staff have access to new technology with Microsoft 365.</p> <p>The PCC welcomed the force exploring how to use modern technology. The CC was asked to outline how the use of data to drive patrol activity would sit alongside existing traditional arrangements. The CC confirmed that the force have an aspiration to be data driven e.g. using data sets to identify areas with the lowest levels of confidence in policing, which in turn would inform internal uplift posts. The Head of Strategy, Planning and Insight is leading on the development of a Digital strategy which will focus on the use of data. <b>Action: CC to share a copy of the finalised Digital Strategy.</b></p> <p>The PCC welcomed the local approach to engagement and building public confidence. It was acknowledged that much of this work sits with SNTs. The PCC queried how the insights from engagement activity informed Corporate Communications. The CC noted that the more the organisation could understand about local communities, the more it could drive activity. The Local Policing Community Charter is a key vehicle and looks at how the organisation can communicate where they are going to be and when so that members of the public have the opportunity to engage with the force.</p> <p>The PCC raised a specific incident that took place in Shropshire 5 days prior to the meeting. The PCC noted the police respond first and then engage with communities after, and was interested in how the force utilised different channels to provide information to communities. The CC confirmed such incidents would involve a professional judgement and consideration of community impact assessment to determine the appropriate approach dependant on whether there were concerns in communities. This would also be guided by local officers to understand the best approach to engage with communities.</p> <p>The PCC queried whether the force had a good understanding of diverse communities and where they were based across West Mercia. The CC made it clear that the force was not complacent about understanding and reaching into new and emerging communities across West Mercia. The CC provided an example of best practice in understanding community makeup from Shropshire. There is a challenge around better understanding data to inform activity (e.g.</p>	CC
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	<p>awaiting the Census data).</p> <p>The PCC asked for assurance that the force's confidence strategy was embedded to drive activity and improve public trust and confidence. The CC confirmed that confidence activity remained ongoing during the review of the strategy. The CC's assessment was that the previous strategy was geared towards internal confidence and required more focus on community confidence. The strategy should help the force understand what drives confidence externally and in turn lead to activity. The confidence data should help prioritise the service offer across different communities acknowledging differences in confidence levels across different groups.</p> <p>The views of the public are incorporated into the strategy via the PCC's Confidence Survey and engagement work via the Local Policing Community Charter. The CC acknowledged that the force had underused the Confidence Survey data in the past but it is now central to the force's confidence strategy. The data suggests that engagement at a neighbourhood level is most important in building confidence.</p>	
2.3	<p><b>Ensuring West Mercia's Local Policing Community Charter delivers on its commitment to the public</b></p> <p><u>Call handling performance</u></p> <p>The PCC recognised the stabilisation of performance for 999 calls and that this was the result of organisational management and focus. This provided reassurance that the force can deliver against key priorities and those involved should be commended. <b>Action: CC to pass on the PCC's thanks to the team as it is the response to their hard work.</b></p> <p>Nationally, there is a move towards publishing performance 'league tables' around call handling performance. The force's performance for 999 calls is in the middle of forces nationally. Forces nationally have identified discrepancies between local 999 data and the data published nationally which included a 'lag'. The PCC sought assurance that the 'lag' was understood. The ACC confirmed that the force understands the impact of the lag and how it affects performance data. Work is ongoing nationally as every force is affected.</p> <p>The PCC commented on the positive steps taken to improve Management Information (MI) related to call handling and queried how this would be incorporated into wider performance management frameworks.</p> <p>The DCC confirmed it sits within the gold &amp; silver performance management products. The improved data has been incorporated into the quarterly report but it is still in its early stages. It is already enabling commanders to really scrutinise data to drive performance.</p>	CC

	<p>The PCC was disappointed around the progress in improving 101 performance. The PCC asked for clarity on the trajectory to recover against the agreed target. The ACC confirmed that performance was subject to monthly oversight through West Mercia Governance Board and quarterly updates on progress to the PCC.</p> <p>Significant work is also underway to look at budgetary decisions that may be required to achieve the target of answering 80% of 101 calls within 30 seconds. The PCC noted the declining performance and confirmed his commitment to support the force to make improvements, including looking at resources which are already significant in this area.</p> <p>The CC stated that the force would have a much clearer position on what was achievable with current resources by September when the recruitment plan should come into effect. It was also acknowledged that performance is dependent on factors outside of force control e.g. number of 999 contacts. The CC reiterated her commitment to continue improving 101 performance.</p> <p>The PCC asked the CC her views on the success of activity to drive channel shift. There has been a significant uplift in the use of Single Online Home (SOH) to report crime. However, this increased uptake has not reduced demand in public contact via 999/101. The DPCC noted the link between experience of 101 and confidence in ability to access the force. The DPCC asked if the public were made aware of options to report online when they call. It was confirmed that there is constant signposting to encourage online reporting including automated messaging when calls are made.</p> <p><u>Resolution centre</u></p> <p>The PCC asked the CC to provide a timeline for the launch of the vulnerability desk and set out what outcomes are anticipated following its implementation. The CC confirmed the vulnerability desk would be in place by March 2023 (in line with the budget for 2022/23).</p> <p>The workforce planning team are determining when officers can be moved into the posts and this is anticipated for Quarter 3. The benefits would include signposting to the most appropriate agency where vulnerability has been identified, reduction in demand and ultimately a better response for those calling for services.</p> <p><u>Accessibility and inclusion</u></p> <p>The PCC asked the CC to clarify if the enhanced service for the deaf community (visible sign interpreter to facilitate 999 calls) was available 24/7 and whether there were any early indicators of the impact it was having. The CC confirmed the service was 24/7. This has been rolled out nationally and data on impact is anticipated in a few months.</p>	
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	<p><u>Social media offer</u></p> <p>A social media pilot was completed in Telford in 2019. The PCC queried the time taken to improve the force's social media offer following the pilot.</p> <p>The CC confirmed that the social media offer was yet to be finalised and would go through Exec Board. The CC confirmed that the focus was not on rationalisation of social media accounts but on improving the social media offer to the public. <b>Action: CC to share the social media paper after it has been finalised at Exec Board.</b></p>	CC
2.4	<p><b>Empowering communities to contribute to community safety</b></p> <p><u>Local Policing Community Charter (LPCC) review</u></p> <p>The PCC is keen to ensure individual contact details for officers are accessible to the public as set out in the LPCC commitments. The PCC asked the CC to clarify the timescales for ensuring SNT contact details were accessible across all channels.</p> <p>The CC confirmed contact details are now on Neighbourhood Matters (NM) and social media, albeit not in the most favourable format given the restrictions of certain social media channels. <b>Action: CC to confirm timescales for contact details to be available through SOH.</b></p> <p>The PCC asked the CC if officers / staff at all levels of the organisation were engaging with and building relationships with a diverse range of communities to raise awareness of the charter. The CC confirmed engagement activity had focused on Parish Councils to date. The recent review of the Charter looked at broadening the offer and the groups being engaged with. It was noted that the force had faced some difficulty engaging with Parish Councils in South Shropshire. The DPCC facilitated a meeting between parish clerks and SNT teams and extended the offer of support for other areas where the force is struggling to engage.</p> <p>A lot of capacity to engage across communities sits in the SNTs. How these relationships are built at all levels and how these insights are shared across departments is subject of review. The PCC sought assurance about engagement at a strategic level. The CC has made a clear commitment around visible and accessible leadership and has asked for a calendar of events to understand what is going on and how support can be provided by Chief Officers.</p> <p>The PCC funds 6 partnership analysts which should support multi-agency data sharing. The PCC asked if there was anything he could do to further support the force in developing the multi-agency data collection plan.</p>	CC

	<p>The CC confirmed that this was on the agenda for a West Mercia Governance Board proposal that in part looked to build on investment in this area and the CC would therefore seek support from the PCC to take these next steps. The PCC and CC will continue to work together to meet key partners.</p> <p><u>Charter performance monitoring</u></p> <p>The PCC queried the governance arrangements for the charter. It was confirmed that this detail was set out in the paper that had gone to West Mercia Governance Board.</p> <p>The performance data provided with the briefing note highlighted a continued discrepancy in the volume of public-facing engagement activities undertaken across LPAs. The CC asked how the CC would ensure consistent focus and prioritisation of the charter across the policing area.</p> <p>The CC noted that the manual data capture against the performance metrics meant the force had limitations in terms of accurately reflecting engagement activity. However, the data that is available allows the Chief Officers to ask questions around the discrepancies and seek assurance.</p> <p>The PCC asked if the CC was confident that police stations were now compliant with the commitments set out in the charter. The CC confirmed quality assurance checks had been completed to confirm compliance. Chief Officers have also undertaken their own dip sampling when visiting stations. There have been a huge improvements but it was noted that anecdotal feedback from the DPCC showed that this needed to be constantly pushed.</p> <p><u>Empowering communities</u></p> <p>The PCC queried whether recruitment strategies for volunteers also sought to empower communities that have previously been less engaged with policing. The CC confirmed there was targeted activity in place but there was more that the force would like to do in this space.</p> <p>The PCC noted the discrepancies in the uptake of different watch schemes across LPAs. The ACC confirmed it was an area of focus for local commanders who recognise the benefits of driving this forward. A Street Watch initiative has been launched in Wythall and there is a constant drive for more people to join. This approach will be reviewed and learning used to roll this type of scheme out across the force. The CC agreed there was too much inconsistency but provided reassurance there is now appropriate focus.</p> <p><u>Special Constabulary</u></p>	
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	<p>Specials recruitment appeared dependent on further investment within the Citizens in Policing (CiP) team. The PCC asked when a decision would be made on investment into the team and for an assessment if planned recruitment was achievable.</p> <p>The CC confirmed that the force had capacity to undertake recruitment activity however the priority for the force this year has to be recruitment of student officers. The pipeline for Specials was considered healthy and there had been approval to recruit a further 28 Specials.</p> <p>The force have set themselves challenging targets but it was acknowledged that applications had plummeted nationally during COVID. Despite the challenge the commitment was there from the CC.</p> <p>The PCC provided the CC with an opportunity to draw out any further nuances as the meeting drew to a close. The CC confirmed ambitious proposals for 22/23 budget setting were well underway and included a suite of recommendations outlined within the briefing note. Of priority was finding ways to effectively identify, reach out and engage with communities who are seldom heard, those younger members of society and the most vulnerable communities. The CC is keen to broaden the ownership of the Community Charter across departments to make it everyone's business.</p> <p>The CC found it useful to have all the information around connecting with communities in one document to draw out synergies and reinforce ambitions for next year.</p> <p>The PCC commented that he would like to see future reports for holding to account to include risks and challenges in the voice of the executive.</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 25<sup>th</sup> August, 10:00am</p> <p>Thematic – Serious Violence</p>	