

Monthly Assurance Meeting November 2022– Meeting Notes

Date: Tuesday 29th November, 14:00 pm
 Chair: John Campion
 Minutes: Natasha Noorbakhsh, Senior Policy Officer, OPCC
 Venue: West Mercia Police HQ

	Name:	Capacity:
Attendance:	John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
	Marc Bayliss	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
	Natasha Noorbakhsh	Senior Policy Officer (SPO)
	Charity Pearce	Policy Officer (PO)
	Pippa Mills	Chief Constable (CC)
	Alex Murray	Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
	Rachel Jones	Assistant Chief Constable Local Policing (RJ)
	Richard Cooper	Assistant Chief Constable Crime & Vulnerability (RC)

No.	Item	
1.	Outstanding Matters / Matters arising N/A	
2.	Holding to account – Performance The meeting focused on force performance as set out in the latest quarterly report for July – September 2022.	
2.1	Victim Satisfaction The PCC noted the disparity in victim satisfaction across local policing areas (LPAs) and asked whether the drivers of this disparity were understood. The CC recognised the need for sustained focus to address the continued disparity across areas. The biggest disparity was for hate crime, however this is also subject to greater fluctuation due to small sample sizes. The force’s new governance arrangements (inc. the monthly performance monitoring board and quarterly victim satisfaction board) will provide strategic oversight of performance and drive	

	<p>consistency around the service offer for victims. This will be supported by communications and messaging to officers and staff, including a pilot using victim videos to raise awareness of the victims' journey (will start as a pilot on 1 area to review the impact).</p> <p>Individual feedback from surveys continues to be used to drive improvements at a tactical level.</p> <p>In August the CC set out a number of short, medium, and long-term activities that needed to be delivered to improve victim satisfaction. The PCC requested an update on this work. It was confirmed that all of the activity planned for August – November had been delivered, including the consolidation of a range of action plans, and the development of a draft Victim Reassurance / Care Communications Strategy.</p>	
<p>2.2</p>	<p>The Victims' Code</p> <p>Both the PCC and CC are committed to ensuring victims receive the most appropriate support. The force has recently started to measure the quality of referrals into the Victim Advice Line (VAL). The PCC asked how further improvements could be made in the delivery of the VAL service, particularly in light of disparities across LPAs.</p> <p>The CC set out that reassurance in relation to VAL was provided by way of a virtual HTA in September 2022. Some of the fluctuations in data across areas is a result of dip sampling methodologies. In addition, the VAL satisfaction survey data continues to show extremely high levels of satisfaction with the service being provided to victims (98.7% would recommend the VAL to other victims of crime).</p> <p>The CC was confident that appropriate governance and scrutiny is being applied locally around putting victims first in respect of the victims' code. A focus on victims is a golden thread throughout Op Reset training and is further embedded with officers and staff through the force's strategic priorities, vision and values.</p> <p>There have been long standing difficulties in monitoring performance in relation to the victims' code (nationally and across sectors). In the absence of a full suite of metrics, the PCC asked how reassurance could be given that victims were receiving the service they were entitled too. The CC confirmed that the force was in a positive position in relation to the victims' code. The force continues to take a leading role with regional and national partners to inform discussions with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) in relation to monitoring performance against the Victims' Code. The MOJ has yet to confirm their data capture or reporting requirements linked to the victims' code and the force has been instrumental in shaping some of this thinking.</p>	
<p>2.3</p>	<p>Outcomes</p>	

	<p>The PCC voiced disappointment over the continuing reduction in the number and proportion of offences being finalised by way of a charge / summons. The Op Reset project was anticipated to increase the proportion of positive outcomes recorded, but has yet to have an impact on overall performance. The CC was asked to assess the effectiveness of Op Reset activity to date and outline when improvements would be seen for victims.</p> <p>The CC confirmed that Op Reset was the overarching approach to drive performance in several areas including outcomes. The CC was not satisfied with the current focus and set out that the force has increasing ambitions in regards to positive outcomes.</p> <p>In order to help improve performance the DCC has been reviewing the performance management framework to help simplify the data and renew the focus within regular performance products and forums. In reviewing the data, the DCC had noted disparity across LPAs and wanted the performance products to provide a more effective mechanism for understanding these disparities.</p> <p>It was noted that outcomes are impacted by a range of factors including response times, file quality and administration. The DCC confirmed that the biggest predictor of outcomes was response times by patrol. All of these factors will receive focus under the new outcomes' performance framework. The framework will also look at differences across different crime types and the impact of changes in crime recording.</p> <p>The PCC noted the impact of timeliness on outcomes and asked when the uplift in officers within Investigations in 2022/23 would start to lead to improved timeliness for victims. The CC would anticipate benefits from Q1 2023/24 when all uplift officers are in post. This will also have an impact on outcomes.</p> <p>Data suggests that Out of Court Disposals (OoCD) are used less frequently in West Mercia compared to the national average. The PCC asked for the CC's assessment of the current approach to OoCD and reassurance that the force is using all powers available to achieve justice for victims.</p> <p>The CC acknowledged that OoCD were used less in West Mercia than in other forces. Part of this appears to be a recording issue related to certain offences such as cannabis possession being finalised by way of an incorrect outcome (OC22). This is being looked at by way of an action set at Force Delivery Group (FDG).</p>	
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	<p>The CC noted that forces who had the highest use of OoCD had moved to the 2 tier OoCD system which is simpler and promotes use by officers and staff.</p> <p>The PCC asked how to improve collaboration with the force around commissioned services to incorporate best practice as the changes to OoCD are implemented next year. The force stood up a project to deliver the OoCD changes 9 months ago. There is a Supt. lead with project management support. As part of this project the force is looking at best practice to inform the approach in West Mercia from April 2023.</p> <p>Part of the links with the PCC’s Commissioning team will be around restorative justice. The force has traditionally used diversion rather than restorative justice. Whilst these 2 outcomes may appear the same to the public, 1 requires garnering an admission (restorative justice OC8; a positive outcome), and 1 doesn’t (diversion, OC22). However, if you use restorative justice, it allows for an escalation of sanctions if the process isn’t effective or there isn’t compliant.</p>	
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Integrated offender management (IOM)</p> <p>Since introducing the Fixed, Flex and Free Categories in October 2021, the threshold to be brought onto IOM is more stringent. There has been a steady reduction in reoffending rates since this time.</p> <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that the changes implemented nationally aren’t masking the reoffending rate of prolific acquisitive offenders.</p> <p>The CC was confident that the changes weren’t masking true reoffending rates. All forces work to a common standard aligned to national direction. West Mercia takes a more pragmatic approach to scoring (inc. having Serious Organised Crime and MAPPA individuals in IOM cohorts). This enables the force to consider those that pose the greatest risk in communities.</p> <p>The CC had reviewed data from 2020 to date which shows a positive reduction in reoffending rates. This reduction has been very gradual which suggests it’s not a significant change / manipulation of the data.</p> <p>Action: The PCC asked the Chief to share the IOM data referred to her response.</p>	<p>CC</p>
<p>2.5</p>	<p>Call handling</p> <p>In the July HTA meeting, the CC set out that the force would be in a much clearer position on the achievability of 101 targets by September</p>	

	<p>when the recruitment plan would come into effect. The PCC asked for an update on when 80% of 101 calls within 30 seconds will be achieved.</p> <p>The CC set out that call handling performance is subject to scrutiny and review across a number of different forums. It was noted that the % of calls answered within 30 seconds should be considered as part of a more sophisticated suite of measures that the force have begun to develop (and share with the PCC via West Mercia Governance Board). A broader suite of metrics has also been incorporated into the weekly performance reports. It was the CC's view that the focus should no longer be on a single performance target but delivering a better service informed through a nuanced set of metrics.</p> <p>Nationally it is acknowledged that 101 performance will be impacted by the increased volume and complexity of 999 calls.</p> <p>As part of the budget setting process, the CC has reviewed the investment that would be required to meet the target. As a result the understanding of the achievability of the previous 80% target has changed. The level of investment required would be significant and unlikely to be agreed as part of the budget for 23/24. In light of this, the PCC asked how communities could be given reassurance around the 101 service.</p> <p>There are a range of plans in place that would positively impact overall performance including investment in technology (e.g. video calling for vulnerable victims of domestic abuse (DA), stabilisation of the platform, broadening accessibility) and the most appropriate agency policy. The CC is comfortable that the force is still providing a good service via 101 with the majority of non-emergency calls answered within 3.5 minutes. The force continues to prioritise 999 calls and performs well compared to regional and national performance.</p> <p>The OCC is also working with the Strategy, Planning and Insight team to understand and improve satisfaction with initial contact. Whilst the CC could not set out what good looks like in respect of the new performance measures (more data needs to be built up to make it reliable), there is a commitment to continual improvement.</p>	
<p>2.6</p>	<p>Response times</p> <p>The PCC noted that response times for Grade 1 incidents (77.4%) remained below the force aspiration of 90%. The PCC asked for assurance that action would be taken to drive improvements and for an anticipated timescale to achieve the 90% target.</p> <p>Due to systems changes, the force has only been able to extract this information since March 2022. There is now increased focus and effort around performance.</p>	

	<p>The CC set out that response times do not just measure deployment but also demonstrate efficiency of systems, appropriate use of resource, and the service to victims.</p> <p>It was clarified that the 90% target is aspirational compared to other forces. It is subject to continuous assessment but it is difficult to project when 90% could be achieved. The force is now able to disaggregate the data more which will help understand pinch points, and telematics will help further improve the data available. A review of preferred staffing levels (PSLs) will also contribute to improving performance as response times will be impacted by resources across teams.</p> <p>The PCC asked whether cultural drivers that impact response times can be overcome to improve the service. ACC RJ confirmed that activity has already started to address this including an escalation process within the contact centre. In particular there has been a real focus on DA and robust quality assurance locally around deployment and unresourced incidents.</p> <p>Action: Update on response times to be provided at HTA in 3 months, with a focus on timescales for achieving 90% target (Feb 2023).</p>	<p>PCC / CC</p>
<p>2.7</p>	<p>Acquisitive crime</p> <p>The PCC noted an increase in acquisitive crime when compared to the same period last year. The CC was asked for reassurance that the increase was understood and a plan in place to mitigate the impact on communities.</p> <p>The DCC stated that the West Mercia-level data masks disparities across LPAs. Some LPAs have seen a reduction in burglary whilst other areas have seen an increase. It was acknowledged that most acquisitive crime is committed by repeat offenders and therefore there is a link to the wider work related to securing positive outcomes.</p> <p>Rural and business community members have voiced concerns to the PCC at a recent parish council meeting. The PCC was pleased with the reassurance provided by the local inspector.</p> <p>The PCC sought reassurance that there was a whole organisation approach to target prolific nominals and communicate this to the public as appropriate. The CC confirmed that data is monitored weekly and used to inform SNT / problem solving team activity.</p> <p>The CC acknowledged that more could be done to better amplify what the force do around local concerns to improve public confidence. This is in part addressed through the LP Charter work. Assurance was provided to the PCC that there is central oversight of communication</p>	

	<p>and engagement activity linked to the Charter including use of Neighbourhood Matters.</p> <p>In terms of a plan to address the increase in acquisitive crime, the DCC confirmed that each LPA commander has taken a lead role across a different type of acquisitive crime with a view to developing a 4P plan – communications will be key to this.</p>	
<p>2.8</p>	<p>Possession of weapons</p> <p>Possession of Weapons Offences have been recorded at higher volumes for the last 6 months. The PCC asked for reassurance that this increase was understood and that there was a plan in place to respond and prevent harm in West Mercia.</p> <p>The CC acknowledged a step change in volumes in April 2022. The hypothesis is that this is due to changes in crime recording. In addition, proactive policing (including knife sweeps, anti-violence week, the knife angel and targeted work of SNTs, problem solving hubs and proactive teams) has led to more knives being recovered which is positive.</p> <p>Whilst the recent increase is likely due to increased activity and changes to recording, in the longer term the commitment is around prevention. The PCC asked whether all partners are engaged in the work to prevent knife crime and whether it has sufficient focus across the system. The CC believes it is a focus for all partners, despite West Mercia not having the volume of crime that other areas experience.</p>	
<p>2.9</p>	<p>Vehicle offences</p> <p>The latest ONS data released for the 12 months ending June 2022 shows levels of vehicle offences in West Mercia have increased by 37% when compared to same period last year. This is one of the highest increases seen in England and Wales. Increases are most marked in South Worcestershire and North Worcestershire.</p> <p>Vehicle offences in Worcestershire were subject to scrutiny via a virtual HTA in April 2022. The hypothesis was that offending in Worcestershire was driven by cross border criminality. The PCC asked whether the CC was satisfied that this was the driver, and whether a clear plan is in place to tackle and disrupt offenders.</p> <p>Vehicle offences is not just theft of a vehicle but also includes interferences. Some of this offending is likely driven by economic challenges and other risk factors such as drug dependency. The force continues to share intelligence regionally and with other forces, particularly in respect of car key burglaries. This has resulted in positive recovery of vehicles. SNTs continue to focus efforts on victim care and the provision of prevention advice.</p>	

	<p>The PCC asked for an update on activity in North Worcestershire in light of disproportionality of offences in the area. The CC confirmed offences were more focused around rural communities. Support is being provided by way of comms prevention advice and use of Smart Water. Local priorities are reviewed at tasking and vehicle crime can be escalated up or down depending on patterns and links to organised criminality.</p> <p>The PCC asked if there was any further support that could be offered in North Worcestershire. The DCC notes that the increase was slightly more significant in South Worcestershire. Both LPAs are monitoring locations and using problem profiles to inform prevention activity. 4P plans are being developed which will also structure the response informed by data.</p> <p>The PCC reiterated his commitment to help address the increase in offences, particularly in regards to funding or lobbying industry / manufacturers.</p>	
<p>2.10</p>	<p>Serious and organised crime (SOC)</p> <p>The PCC has previously raised concerns regarding the decrease in SOC disruptions (February 2022 HTA). The force had previously committed to undertaking analysis to better understand this trend. The PCC asked for an update on this work.</p> <p>ACC RC reviewed the analysis and there was no conclusive answer as to the decrease in early 2022. 1 hypothesis is that following a concerted focus on organised crime group (OCG) mapping and disruptions in 2020/21, the force reached a position where all groups were mapped and all possible disruption activity had taken place.</p> <p>Disruptions have since recovered to 33 a quarter on average. ACC RC is satisfied that work is ongoing to address this, including arrangements for administration, and utilising best practice from other forces to ensure disruptions stay at a relatively high level.</p> <p>ACC RC noted that disruptions doesn't provide a perfect picture of offending as it only relates to mapped OCGs.</p> <p>The SPO asked about the force's communications activity to support the approach to tackling SOC. ACC RC confirmed SOC was identified as a bronze priority for the comms team and that there is campaign activity. However, work around Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Op Reset has been prioritised in the first instance.</p> <p>The Government has set an expectation that there will be a 20% increase in major and moderate disruptions linked to the drug strategy. The PCC asked how this would be achieved given the decrease seen recently.</p>	

	<p>The force is currently considering the nuances around recording, e.g. County Lines (CL) disruptions are not currently counted as SOC disruptions. In the longer term, the force has a clear focus on drug disruptions within the SOC delivery plan and continue to undertake proactive dismantling activity in partnership with the Regional Organised Crime Unit.</p> <p>The force has recently been subject to a peer review through the national CLs centre to see what more could be done and are awaiting this feedback. ACC RC is confident that the improvements can be achieved through better capturing the activity already underway.</p>	
<p>2.11</p>	<p>Road traffic collisions (RTCs)</p> <p>There has been an increasing trend in casualties this financial year with motorcyclists disproportionately featuring in statistics. The PCC asked how this data is used to inform police activity and prevent harm.</p> <p>The CC was pleased that over the last 5 years there has been no significant increase in casualties or fatalities in the force area. There was an increase following the easing of COVID restrictions but this didn't exceed previous totals. The force is also not an outlier compared to other areas. However, motorcyclist do feature disproportionality in fatal collisions.</p> <p>This data is used to inform educational activity including working with colleagues in Cheshire around cross border events and broader comms / awareness raising campaigns (including, Think Bike! Campaign). This is also reflected in presence at motorcycle events, speed enforcement, traffic management advisors and engagement with Local Authorities. Nationally the NPCC are developing a motorcycle pilot focused on driver education. Where education programmes are in place (e.g. MORSE) the force constantly reviews their effectiveness.</p> <p>The force endorses a data led approach to understand reasons for collisions and shares the data with the road safety team and partners to reduce vulnerability and improve safety.</p>	
<p>2.12</p>	<p>Preferred Staffing Levels (PSLs)</p> <p>North Worcestershire and Telford frequently remain under or just on PSL. It is recognised that modelling for 23/24 shows significant improvement in the New Year.</p> <p>The PCC asked for reassurance that current workforce planning arrangements are effectively mitigating the shortfall to reduce the impact on the public. SNT abstractions are a frequent issue raised with the CC by the PCC. Some of the challenge and feedback the PCC has received from members of the public has been shared with local areas</p>	

	<p>to inform future activity.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the force’s access to management information and ability to project PSLs based on student officer rotations. Student officers are not included within the PSLs until week 37 when they achieve independent patrol status. This forward planning allows mitigations to be put in place including the postponement of non-essential courses, CID supporting the prisoner process to free up patrol, negotiating deferred student officer rotations, reducing rotations from 10 weeks to 6 weeks, and utilising Specials to bolster patrol.</p> <p>The PSL data is subject to daily and weekly review. This enables commanders to look at where they are above PSL and whether any abstracted officers can be released.</p> <p>The PCC asked if professional judgement is applied to ensure that resources are in the right place. CC confirmed that this happens through the daily and weekly review process set out above. Where officers exceed the PSL they can focus on unresourced incidents if they are not released or deployed elsewhere.</p> <p>Earlier projections foresaw the pinch points in Telford. The next round of students through in 2023/24 should lead to a more resilient picture. This also feeds into a wider piece of work by RHL to review if PSLs are correct.</p> <p>Since September, similar work has been underway to look at resilience over Christmas and during the World Cup. Pinch points have been identified around specific dates and the force is reducing abstractions wherever possible. Call handling data shows the impact the World Cup is having on demand. There is also a need to have additional resources out in the community.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>The CC confirmed that the DCC was reviewing the force’s performance management framework with a view to changing the balanced scorecard approach.</p> <p>A paper would be submitted to West Mercia Governance Board in December 2022, following consultation with the PCC’s team.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Confirmation of next meeting type / date / time / venue: Monday 19th December 2022 14:00 Thematic – VAWG. Hindlip HQ.</p>	