

CRIME & DISORDER OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Derek Sharp (Chairman), Hari Sharma (Vice-Chairman), John Story, Simon Werner, Marion Mills and Eileen Quick

Also in attendance: Councillor Leo Walters, Chief Constable Francis Habgood, RBWM LPA Commander Colin Hudson and Deputy Police Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber

Officers: Andy Carswell and Chris Nash

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Cllr Sharma nominated Cllr Sharp for the role of Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Story and agreed by all Members.

Cllr Sharp nominated Cllr Sharma for the role of Vice Chairman. This was seconded by Cllr Mills and agreed by all Members.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Cllr Sharp be appointed Chairman and Cllr Sharma be appointed Vice Chairman for the 2018/19 municipal year.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bhatti and Parish Cllr MacDonald. Apologies were also received from Cllr Rayner, who was not a Panel member but had submitted a question to the Chief Constable and had hoped to ask it in person.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 20TH MARCH 2018

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on March 20 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

ANNUAL PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF CONSTABLE, POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

The Deputy Police Crime Commissioner introduced himself and gave the first presentation to the Panel. He stated that there were five strategic priorities for the PCC, which were set out in the Thames Valley Police and Crime Plan for 2017-21 in order for the Chief Constable to develop the Police Delivery Plan. These priorities were vulnerability; prevention and early intervention; reducing re-offending; serious organised crime and terrorism; and police ethics and reform. The Deputy Police Crime Commissioner stated that a single contact point for victims of crime, their families, and witnesses had been brought in-house and was able to provide specialist support. He stated that £120,000 had been awarded through grant funding to organisations that improved knowledge and awareness of female genital mutilation. The Deputy Crime Commissioner stated that FGM was known to be a serious problem, but there

was no virtually no reporting of it so it was hard to ascertain the scale of it. A further £900,000 of the PCC's Community Safety Fund had been allocated to Local Authorities to spend specifically on youth offending prevention.

The Deputy Crime Commissioner stated that a number of inspections had been carried out. The majority of these had been positive but the result of one of the inspections, relating to recording of crime, had been disappointing to Thames Valley Police. The main issue related to whether they were reported as crimes or incidents, and steps had been taken to improve recording of crimes in line with the inspection's recommendations.

The Deputy Crime Commissioner informed the Panel that there had been a rise in crime in the Thames Valley area, although this had been a lesser increase compared to the national average. Instances of burglary had increased at a higher rate than the national average, and Neighbourhood teams had made a significant focus on tackling this issue. As a result there had been an improvement in relation to burglary figures. The Deputy Crime Commissioner stated that a large proportion of burglaries were being committed by criminals from outside the Thames Valley area.

The Deputy Crime Commissioner stated that instances of stop and search by officers had declined, while instances of knife crime had increased. He stated that there was a similar pattern nationwide, although it did not necessarily follow that the two were connected. However the Deputy Crime Commissioner stated that more training relating to stop and search was being given to officers, and that they were being given greater encouragement to use these powers. He added that the Force had received very few complaints in relation to stop and search.

The Chief Constable gave the second presentation to the Panel. He informed Members that the last year had been exceptionally busy in terms of large operations; policing the Royal Wedding had been the largest operation Thames Valley Police had carried out before being surpassed by the visit of the President of the USA. In addition officers from Thames Valley had been involved in the Salisbury Novichok investigation.

Regarding call figures, the Chief Constable stated that there would be an average of 20-25,000 999 calls per month. However there had been a significant spike up to 35,000 in July. This had been attributed partly to the exceptionally warm weather, which had led to increased incidents of neighbourhood disputes, antisocial behaviour and road rage. It had been noted that the number of 101 calls had decreased and it was believed the two were linked. During the spike in reports in July, call answering times on the 101 number had been as long as seven minutes. The Chief Constable stated that members of the public were being encouraged to report non-emergency incidents online.

The Chief Constable stated there had been a significant increase in violent crimes. Reasons for this increase included reports now being categorised as crimes rather than incidents, and a suspect being charged with more than one offence of violence relating to the same incident. There had also been an increase in reported incidents taking place in care homes, schools and prisons; however, in the case of the last two there were other means of dealing with them other than police involvement. The Chief Constable stated that 18 groups of people from outside the Thames Valley area had been identified as committing violent crimes; nine people had been charged and were going through the courts, and more were expected in the future. The Chief Constable stated that combatting criminals from outside the Thames Valley Police area who were committing crimes in it – known as county lines – was an area that officers were specifically targeting.

The Chief Constable reiterated the Deputy Police Crime Commissioner's earlier point about the initiative regarding tackling burglary, and stated that working with Councils' Community Wardens had proved to be very important. Another initiative to be worked on in the last year related to restorative justice, which had been introduced into schools to allow disputes to be resolved early.

The Chief Constable stated successes in the Royal Borough this year included combating antisocial behaviour at the McDonald's restaurant in Thames Street, Windsor; co-ordinating support and research to assist homeless people in Windsor; improved partnership working amongst the Safeguarding team; and plans to introduce a safety hub as a focal point to people at risk at night time.

Cllr Werner entered the meeting at 6.37pm.

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions based on the presentations that had been given. The Vice Chairman asked about the increase in reporting of hate crimes and asked if this was due to more people reporting it. The Deputy Police Crime Commissioner said people felt more encouraged to report it, and that they were being reported as crimes instead of incidents. He added that people were contacting the police when there was the perception that they had been the victim of a hate crime.

Cllr Quick asked how significant the problem relating to county lines was. The Deputy Police Crime Commissioner stated there were significant issues across the Thames Valley Police area but generally these would be in larger population areas such as Reading, Oxford and Milton Keynes. He stated that the serious organised crimes committed by county lines had a knock-on effect onto smaller neighbourhoods, such as drug dealing and antisocial behaviour. The RBWM LPA Commander stated that his officers had been working with colleagues from Bedfordshire Police, as there was significant county lines activity from this area. A Schools Officer had been appointed to help in this regard.

Cllr Werner stated there were significant problems with people openly taking drugs in Windsor, and stated his belief police were not taking enough action to combat it, which had the effect of normalising drug taking. The RBWM LPA Commander stated he was aware of the problem and a specific operation would be implemented soon. The Chief Constable stated that drug takers would not necessarily be actively targeted, but if officers came across one they would be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Cllr Walters asked about the onus of proof relating to the reporting of hate crimes. The Chief Constable stated that for recording of a crime, it could be based on the victim perceiving themselves as having been the victim of a hate crime; however the onus was far higher before it could be passed to the CPS. He added that when cases of hate crime came to court, the conviction rate was high.

Cllr Mills asked about the policy of officers wearing body cameras, in order to assist with stop and search. The Chief Constable stated there weren't enough cameras to provide to individual officers, and there were issues about where to download the material the cameras collected. The Deputy Police Crime Commissioner stated that all footage taken from cameras had been viewed and in each case it was felt the officer's actions had been proportionate.

The Chairman gave his congratulations to officers for their work in policing the high profile events in the Thames Valley area, and stated their finest hour was policing the Royal Wedding.

Questions which had been submitted in advance by RBWM Councillors were then put to the Chief Constable.

Cllr Rayner asked the following three questions:

- On average, how many hours a week have TVP officers patrolled Horton and Wraysbury over the last 12 months?
- Can councillors across the borough be advised of the names and contact of their local police officers?

- Most summer evenings and at weekends motorbikes are driven around Horton and Wraysbury on the public highways, with riders often not wearing helmets. How are the police dealing with this issue?

Regarding the first question, the RBWM LPA Commander stated that it was not easy to find out this information as the recording of despatches made by the Neighbourhood team and the Response team were different. The Chief Constable added that in any event it was a low crime area. Regarding the second question, the Chief Constable stated that details of all Neighbourhood teams were on the Thames Valley Police website and the www.police.uk site. In relation to the third question, the RBWM LPA Commander stated that this was being dealt with by the Parish Council.

The Vice Chairman asked the following question;

- Murders and knife attacks are on the rise in England and Wales, but officials say crime levels are stabilising. Murders have risen by 12 per cent and crime involving knives or sharp instrument by 16 per cent in England and Wales. Overall crime forces logged a total of 5.5million offence a rise of 11 per cent compared with the previous year. My question is violent sexual offences and anti-social behaviour are on the rise from previous years. What extra measures had been taken by Thames Valley Police to combat these crimes in the Royal Borough?

The Chief Constable stated that up to 40 per cent of sexual offences reported to Thames Valley Police in the past year were more than a year old, but were recorded in this year's crime figures. Some offences dated back up to 60 years. Specialist teams had been set up to help combat domestic abuse and antisocial behaviour, with the result that the RBWM LPA had the lowest rate of antisocial behaviour in the Thames Valley Police area. The Vice Chairman stated that work carried out in Glasgow relating to early intervention had led to a dramatic reduction in serious violent crime and murders. The Chief Constable stated that the Mayor of London had encouraged the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to look at this, and that the work in Glasgow included principles that Thames Valley Police were implementing, such as partnership working and early intervention.

Cllr Story left the meeting at 7pm.

Councillor Quick asked the following question:

- What provision has been made for a Thames Valley Police base in Windsor where there will be a regular police presence and the public can drop in?

The Chief Constable reminded Members that there had been plans for a hub centre including a police station in a building run by the Council, but these were now not being progressed with. A public centre had been set up in Windsor, but very few people used it. The Chief Constable stated that fewer people were using police stations to report crimes, and that his preference was for officers to be out on the beat instead of being at the police station. Cllr Quick said she appreciated this viewpoint, adding that a police station would be beneficial to tourists who were victims of theft or pickpocketing. It was suggested that, with appropriate training, the Tourist Information Office could be designated as a police contact point.

Councillor Bhatti asked the following three questions:

- Residents in Clewer North continue to complain about events held at the Windsor Racecourse because of drugs, litter and anti-social behaviour, is the police aware of the problem especially from the 'Tea Party' event and what measures are they taking to prevent this?
- My residents in Clewer North over the past year have been disturbed by a number of unauthorised encampments, what measures are the police taking to stop the encroachment of land in RBWM?
- Clewer and Dedworth has seen a rise in drug related crime, please can the Chief Constable give me an update on the levels of crime in that area?

Regarding the first question, the RBWM LPA Commander stated a meeting on this had taken place the previous day and he would know more details in due course. In relation to the second question, the Chief Constable stated there was a protocol in dealing with unauthorised encampments, which had been signed by Thames Valley Police and the Royal Borough, but often members of the public were unaware as to whose responsibility it was to tackle the problem and what the relevant legislation was. Some Councils were looking to use civil injunctions to solve the problem, and a meeting on this was due to take place in November. The RBWM LPA Commander stated that attempts were being made to improve communication between the police and local authorities to solve issues around encampments more promptly. Members were informed that the responsibility of resolving unauthorised encampments rested with whoever owned the land. Regarding the third question, the RBWM LPA Commander stated that there had been a 40 per cent increase in reported drug related crime in Clewer and Dedworth, although in other parts of Windsor there had been a 50 per cent decrease. He stated that the reasons for this were unclear.

The Chairman invited Members to ask questions that had not been submitted previously to the Chief Constable. The Chairman asked for clarification on a recent newspaper report that suggested Thames Valley Police had lost 1,000 officers over the past three years, and asked how this impacted on policing in the Royal Borough. The Chief Constable stated that Thames Valley Police had lost 1,000 members of staff over the past seven years; of these 400-450 were officers. In that time Thames Valley Police had lost £100million in real-term budget. The Chief Constable said there had been changes in the way services were delivered, and spending had been cut from areas that were no longer required. However Thames Valley Police had been looking to recruit new officers and PCSOs in the Royal Borough.

The Chairman asked if the new CCTV system had been installed. Members were informed there was information on this at this time. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

Cllr Werner stated that a Neighbourhood Action Group had recently been re-established in Windsor and asked what Thames Valley Police's commitment was to supporting neighbourhood policing. The Chief Constable stated there was a full commitment to neighbourhood policing. In recent months neighbourhood officers had needed to be seconded to cover for other operations, but they had now been returned to their neighbourhoods.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Constable, RBWM LPA Commander and Deputy Police Crime Commissioner for attending the meeting.

DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman informed Members that the dates of the next meetings were as follows:

- 12 December 2018 at 7pm
- 6 February 2019 at 7pm
- 16 April 2019 at 7pm

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.21 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....