

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 14 March 2019 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 5.30 pm
Concluded 7.15 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE
Azam Duffy Bacon Green Kamran Hussain Watson	Cooke M Smith M Pollard

Observers: Councillor Hinchcliffe (Leader of Council) and Councillors Dunbar and Jabar (Members of the Police and Crime Panel)

Apologies: Councillor J Sunderland and Councillor Ward

Councillor Azam in the Chair

58. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were disclosed.

59. MINUTES

Resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2019 be signed as a correct record .

60. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

61. REFERRALS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

No referrals were made to this Committee.

62. MEETING WITH THE WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME

COMMISSIONER

Previous Reference: Minute 13 (2018/19)

In response to a previous resolution of this Committee, the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner had been invited to attend the meeting to discuss key safer communities issues across Bradford District.

Members had also been provided with **Document “AF”** which contained as appendices the West Yorkshire Police and Crime 2016-2021 and the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Annual Report 2017-18. The Chair opened the meeting by reminding colleague members of the background to the invitation to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC); advising that an update of the Prevent programme would shortly be provided to the Committee and noting that detailed scrutiny reviews on the issues of domestic violence and hate crime would be undertaken in the near future.

The PCC attended the meeting along with Chief Superintendent Bisset and Criminal Justice Advisor Kate Jowett and gave a detailed verbal presentation in respect of his role across West Yorkshire, advising that he was responsible for setting the Police and Crime Plan and the overall budget for West Yorkshire Police. He explained that he had a wide role in terms of criminal justice before turning to the specific issues which the Committee had raised when inviting him to speak.

In respect of those issues, he highlighted the following points:

- A victim strategy had been developed which he viewed as a hugely positive development.
- A reducing reoffending strategy had also been developed. The PCC considered that any progress that could be made locally in terms of reducing reoffending was extremely important.
- Bradford District had benefitted significantly from the “Proceeds of Crime” funding, from which grants of amounts of up to £500,000 could be made.
- A key issue for Bradford was around road safety and dangerous driving and the PCC noted that there was new capacity for roads policing in the last budget. He supported the new Order for the city centre and highlighted that Operation Steerside, which was a road safety policing initiative across Bradford, had been supported by the Council and he had provided funds back to the Council. He did, however, acknowledge that this issue remained an area of concern for Bradford.
- A second area of particular concern for Bradford was burglary and the impact of burglary. He explained that more capacity was being built into neighbourhood policing teams to respond to such crimes and a great deal of investment had been made in areas such as number plate recognition technology, which provided a good way of locating criminals.
- He considered the education of the young in respect of issues such as the consequences of driving without insurance and of speeding to be extremely important and had held meetings with representatives of the motor insurance industry to explore what more could be done on these issues.
- He noted that the Council was a member of the West Yorkshire Casualty Reduction Partnership, as was the Police, and that the Partnership took a

strategic view on hotspot data in respect of road safety. He also provided funding which had enabled local schools and colleges to invest in learning materials such as DVDs explaining the consequences of matters such as using a mobile phone whilst driving. He also noted that he worked very closely with BRAKE in terms of dealing with bereavement from deaths on the road.

- He then turned to the issues of domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation (CSE) and explained that he was working very closely with Police colleagues on this issue as victims were still coming forward. He considered it crucial to support those victims and to investigate such crimes. He highlighted that he was currently joint funding advocate posts around West Yorkshire in conjunction with Rape Crisis to ensure that victims received specialist support as cases worked their way through the criminal justice system. He had also provided joint funding for a sexual assault referral centre that meant victims could be examined under specialist conditions, which was a huge step forward for victim welfare. He also highlighted that he had been speaking to the judiciary about the possibility of vulnerable victims being able to communicate via video links from Victim Hubs in Halifax and Wakefield.
- Work had been undertaken with a theatre group after consultation with the five West Yorkshire Children's Strategic Directors had highlighted the need to raise awareness among children about the need to protect themselves and report things which made them uncomfortable. As a result, the Mr Shapeshifter play, a modern day fairy tale about the way in which an adult could abuse a child's trust had been widely used in schools and was now available online as a free resource animation.
- A joint campaign on reporting hate crime was being run with the Police as this was an issue which people in Bradford had reported as being of concern to them via the recent "Your Views" survey. Work had also been undertaken with the Hate Crime Alliance and a phone app had been developed to facilitate the reporting of hate crime.
- The issue of substance abuse continued to be of concern and he intended to work closely with Chief Superintendent Bisset on this issue.
- All the issues set out above were set against a very challenging time for West Yorkshire Police which had lost 2,000 posts since 2010. Recruitment to 500 new posts had been undertaken recently but that would take time to have an effect as new officers needed a training period of 18 months and the officer complement was now very young in service.

The Chair thanked the PCC for his presentation and, having expressed thanks on behalf of all members for the work of the neighbourhood policing teams, opened the meeting up to questions and comments from the Committee.

A member advised that she had tried out the "Stop Hate UK" phone app but had noted that it required a user to provide bank details, even though it was a free app. She considered this might deter some people from using it. The PCC undertook to refer that concern back to the relevant person to check that this was a free service.

The member also asked about the use of the 101 non-emergency phone number and was advised that it was a key link with the public but the number of calls had reached record numbers in the last 12 months, possibly as the result of pressures

on other public services. The PCC advised that he would like to revisit the use of the 101 service with the Government when the contract came up for renewal.

The Chief Superintendent also commented on this issue, stressing that it was important to find ways in which to keep the public informed, using new technology and better information and advising that this was a national issue. He highlighted that he was very pleased with emergency call attendance rates but that non-emergency call attendance rates still needed work. The PCC supported that view and advised that no 999 call had been abandoned in the last two years, which was a tremendous achievement.

A member queried the policy of allowing experienced members of staff to leave when they were needed to mentor new recruits. He was advised that there was no longer a policy of voluntary exit and that any officers who left had simply completed their service. There had previously been such a scheme but it had finished and had not been renewed in the aftermath of the tragic events in Paris in 2015.

A question was asked about the management of the new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and in response, the Chief Superintendent advised that the Order would be supported by the Community Safety Partnership with the Local Authority in the lead. Where anti-social behaviour was reported, the role of the PSPO would come into play and in cases where the Road Traffic Act could also be used, that would happen. A new digital portal which could accept dashcam footage from the public was being put into place and would be part of a new wider approach to a complex issue. The Chief Superintendent welcomed the new PSPO, considering that it would help people to feel safer on the street. A Member stated that he did not share that view and had voted against the PSPO and asked whether the "Your Views" consultation had been properly sampled as he had noted that the response to previous consultation on the PSPO had come disproportionately from older white males. He was advised that "Your Views" had been professionally put together by research analysts and had used random sampling.

The member also considered that the reports provided for this meeting had not contained enough data. He was advised that detailed quarterly data was provided to the Police and Crime Panel and that for the purposes of the documents provided, government advice had been to move away from being primarily target driven.

The Chief Superintendent also commented that Councillors and Neighbourhood Policing Teams were both valuable resources for communicating how a community was feeling.

A member asked for additional detail in respect of work on preventing reoffending and was advised that the PCC had on-going concerns in respect of the operation of the probation service. He stressed that he had no criticism of the staff but that he was very concerned about the structure of the organisation since changes of 6-7 years ago. He also stated that a local reoffending strategy had been launched and interventions for especially vulnerable groups such as women prisoners were being looked into. Ms Jowett stressed that the new initiative in respect of women offenders was vital in view of the profound impact on whole families when women were drawn into crime. She also advised that work was underway with

organisations to get pathways into employment in order to avoid reoffending and stressed that Bradford had led the way on restorative justice.

The member also asked for the PCC's views on improving confidence in the Police, recounting that constituents had reported to him that they had passed on information about criminal activity but felt that little was happening. He also queried the practice of diverting Neighbourhood Policing Teams to police major incidents elsewhere when it meant that the neighbourhood they usually served was left without a policing presence. In response, he was advised that there was an issue to be resolved in respect of keeping the public informed. In an effort to improve that, officers were being provided with handheld devices to update reports while they were out in the community instead of having to wait until they returned to their stations. It was also noted that it was often difficult to report on progress immediately as data must be gathered. In respect of the issue of redeploying Neighbourhood Police, he was advised that a critical incident would always need resourcing but that every effort was made not to use Neighbourhood Teams for that.

The PCC and members of the Committee concurred that the current consultation on discontinuing the use of very short prison sentences was a positive move and that community rehabilitation and employment opportunities would be important issues towards success. They considered that this was especially key for diverting young people away from crime.

The Leader of Council who was in attendance as an observer advised the Committee about a project to prevent young people reoffending which had recently taken place in Bradford and had been very successful.

A member then asked a question in respect of the consequence of officers moving to regional priorities and whether their posts could be backfilled. In response, he was advised that regional initiatives such as the Counter Terrorism Unit did have an effect on staffing as the Unit was based in West Yorkshire and did attract local staff, especially those who were already in service and experienced. Again, this meant that officers in district policing were young in service .

A question was asked in respect of the work being undertaken in schools and with excluded pupils and members were advised that some fantastic work was going on with schools and programmes such as the Early Intervention Youth Fund. The PCC did express some concern about the number of young people being excluded from schools as he considered there to be a risk that a generation of young people vulnerable to gang activity was being created. He had plans to look into this issue more closely in conjunction with Local Authorities. He also expressed concern that the school system was becoming more and more fragmented which made it harder to collate data.

The Chief Superintendent also commented that work was undertaken through a multi agency hub in respect of exclusions and off-rolling. He stressed how much work it took to track such young people down and the need to work as a partnership to achieve early intervention. The PCC concurred with that view, stressing that it affected the whole community if children were drawn into criminality.

A member stressed that this issue affected rural communities as well as urban areas and commented that it would be helpful to have a report explaining how all the services interlocked in order to avoid double provision. He noted that there was a major power company in Wharfedale which had a long history of offering employment to young offenders. Both the Chief Superintendent and the PCC concurred that it was important to bear in mind what was already proving successful but that achieving improvement took time and must be sustained.

Questions were asked about the issue of knife crime and members were advised that, while there had been a sharp increase in knife crime and violent crime in West Yorkshire, there wasn't the same type of problem that was being reported in the media in respect of knife crime in London. However, the PCC stressed that it was important not to be complacent and to press on with the initiatives already outlined at this meeting. He stressed that he was also asking the questions put forward by members in respect of understanding how gang culture occurred in the first place and why some groups may be benign while others became criminal. He also stressed how important it was to dispel the impression among young people that they would be safer if they carried a knife, when the reality was that they were six times more likely to be harmed.

The Chair asked the PCC to confirm that his commitment to work on preventing dangerous driving would continue and was assured that it would.

The Chair then read out a question about working with young people before they became involved in crime which had been emailed to him by a member of the Committee who had been unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that most of the subject matter of the question had already been covered during the meeting but in respect of the issue of keeping witnesses up to date with progress in investigating a crime, it was the role of the Police Officer involved to keep the victim informed and this was an area where West Yorkshire Police could improve. There was a question around the Witness Care Team contacting victims but they only engaged with people once there was a charge. The PCC advised that Victim Support could be contacted by witnesses or that he would investigate case work.

Resolved –

(1) That Mr Burns Williamson, the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Superintendent Bisset be thanked for their attendance and discussion with members regarding safer communities issues across the District and future dialogue be looked forward to.

(2) That the safer communities work being done across the District be welcomed.

Action: Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Chair

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER