

OFFICE OF POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR GWENT
STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
3rd JUNE 2020

Present: **Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC)**
Mr J Cuthbert - Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Ms E Thomas – Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner (DPCC)
Mr D Garwood-Pask – Chief Finance Officer (CFO)
Mrs S Curley – Chief Executive (CEX)
Mrs N Warren – Governance Officer (GO)

Office of the Chief Constable (OCC)
Ms P Kelly – Chief Constable (CC)
Mrs A Blakeman – Deputy Chief Constable (DCC)
Mr N Stephens – Assistant Chief Officer, Resources (ACOR)
Mr N McInnes – Chief Superintendent – Head of Strategy Performance and Change (HoSPC)
Ms N Wesson – Head of Corporate Communications (HoCC)
Mrs N Brennan – Head of Joint Legal Services (HoJLS)

Staff Associations
Ms J Everson (Unison)
Ms M Henry (Police Federation)

The meeting commenced at 10:00am.

The PCC thanked all involved for their hard work and professionalism during the Coronavirus pandemic and advised us that technical questions would be collated and sent to the Force for a response outside of the meeting. The resultant information would be published on the OPCC website for transparency.

APOLOGIES

Action

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Edwards – Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)

MINUTES

2. We received and confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd March 2020.

Page 2, Chief Constable's Update

The PCC queried if the learning report of the Wales Modern Slavery/Mass Fatalities Workshop exercise in January 2020 had been shared with the Local Resilience Forum and requested sight of the report. The CC advised us that the report had been drafted and would ascertain if the report had been shared prior to providing a copy of the report to the PCC.

CC

ACTIONS

Action

3. We received and noted the actions from the meeting held on the 2nd March 2020.

Action 3, Organisational Performance Report Against the Police and Crime Plan Priorities

The PCC asked for an update on the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) contract. The CC confirmed that work was ongoing in this area and she would be in a position to provide an update within a month.

CC

REPORT ON PERFORMANCE IN RELATION TO COVID 19

4. We received the Performance Report in relation to COVID 19.

The CC thanked all involved for their support and commitment during this difficult time and emphasised that their hard work had made a positive impact on public confidence as she had received a significant number of complimentary letters and social media messages from the public thanking the Force for their support. The CC thanked key leaders such as the ACC, J Edwards, Superintendent I Roberts for chairing the daily Gold Groups and Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) ensuring a partnership response to COVID in Gwent. The CC also thanked Superintendent G Fernquest for his proactive response, and the OPCC and staff associations for their support throughout this unprecedented time.

In the early stages of the pandemic the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) and the Welsh Government were meeting daily to share information and good practice between partnership agencies which assisted the Force in maintaining business continuity.

The Force had received recognition from the Law Society for their swift implementation of protective measures within the custody units including the use of protective screens in interview rooms, enhanced cleaning procedures, additional handwashing facilities and social distancing floor markings.

The CC informed us that the Force had benefited from the significant investment in Information Technology (IT) as members of staff were able to continue to work from home during the pandemic, including those who were required to self isolate. As such, the Force was able to continue with business as usual and also to focus on areas for improvement; the Niche policing system was cleansed to improve the quality of police data, and victims received incident updates more promptly.

The DPCC asked the CC whether other benefits had arisen as a result of the significant investment in IT. The CC explained that other

Forces had over 200 employees at home who were not in a position to contribute and that was not the case for Gwent Police as officers and staff had been provided with laptops and mobile phones which enabled officers and staff members to continue to deploy vehicles to 101 calls from home. Office365 had also been rolled out which allowed the Force to communicate more effectively and securely.

During the initial stages of the pandemic it had been difficult to obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for officers and staff members and therefore it was sourced locally at a higher cost. However, levels had been good for some time.

By working closely with Public Health Wales and the Aneurin Bevan Health Board, front line staff had been tested from an early stage which enabled them to go back to work quickly.

The CC was pleased that recorded sickness levels had been low during this time at around 3 of Police officers, this was primarily due to the work undertaken in relation to wellbeing and improved supervision of sickness but it was acknowledged this could potentially be impacted upon, due to the introduction of track and trace procedures requiring periods of isolation or a second wave of the COVID 19 infection.

The Force had sourced accommodation for officers who had made the difficult decision to live away from their families to protect them while they continued to work, for which the CC offered her thanks.

The Occupational Health department had provided invaluable support to frontline staff online by conducting virtual wellbeing meetings to staff who required it during this time.

There had been a significant improvement in performance by the Force Control Room (FCR), particularly in the use of the social media desk which had seen a substantial increase in demand. In order to meet demand whilst complying with social distancing guidelines, the FCR had been split across three sites and school liaison officers redeployed to assist the FCR.

The Learning and Development Department had continued the recruitment process and conducted training of Police Staff, and Officers in order to meet the Force requirements with the use of virtual technology and social distancing for classroom based training.

There had been a 15% decrease overall in the level of crime but despite crime falling there had been a significant increase in Force demand, particularly over the bank holidays. However, between March and May 2020 the Force had made 1257 arrests in comparison to 1090 for the same period the previous year, 157 of the arrests were over the bank holiday weekend. Over 300 vehicles were seized and

Class A drugs amounting to £900,000 was recovered in May 2020 and taken off the streets.

Action

There had been a 16% increase in domestic related crime in comparison to the previous year. However, there was initially a reduction in the number of reported domestic abuse incidents during the early stages of COVID 19 which had stabilised to normal levels. increased to normal levels. The CC thanked the Corporate Communication Department for their 'Reading between the lines' campaign' which had been instrumental in the increase.

The CC drew our attention to areas of concern in the future such as the potential impact of COVID19 on disadvantaged communities as the level of crime could increase as a result of job losses.

The CC was liaising with the Crown Prosecution Service, Courts in Wales, and the Secretary of State for Wales in order to resolve the delay in the charging process as only 3 Crown Courts were undertaking trials.

The CC confirmed Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) figures were published fortnightly and 91 FPNs had been issued. The PCC asked for confirmation of the number to date and received confirmation that 210 FPNs had been issued and 118 had been quality assured and confirmed by the Criminal Records Office (ACRO).

The CC thanked all involved in the introduction of the Silver Business Support function for ensuring the delivery of key functions including Payroll, Fleet, HR and also the Communications team for their key messaging to staff and the general public relating to Welsh guidelines.

The DPCC thanked the Joint Legal Services Team for their professionalism during this time in ensuring that changes to legislation were issued to frontline officers promptly.

The CC advised us that Force focus was on the planning and resumption of business as usual with the 'new normal' taking into consideration lessons learnt and management of costs in relation to COVID19.

The DPCC asked what plans had been made regarding the lessons learnt and recovery in relation to the Force, Gwent Strategic Coordination Group and other Welsh Forces as a result of COVID19.

The CC explained that investment in IT had been a key factor in ensuring business continuity, enabling agile working and officer visibility and this would continue. An example of this being vehicle stops, as the data could be recorded remotely out in the community.

A learning the lessons log had been kept throughout the pandemic

and shared with other Forces to identify areas for learning such as the sourcing of PPE.

Action

The SCG had assisted in ensuring a swift recovery to changes brought about as a result of the pandemic by working with partners.

The CC and PCC had been briefing Members of Parliament and the Senedd, which had enabled the sharing of good work and highlighted the key areas of the Force requiring support.

The CC informed us that Gwent 10 G10) group would need to consider a different agenda in terms of partnership working in areas of resilience and the Green agenda as a result of the pandemic. An example being IT, as it could be used more efficiently as meetings could take place online when appropriate rather than unnecessary travel.

The PCC thanked the CC for her update.

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN PRIORITIES

5. We received the organisational performance report against the Police and Crime Plan (the Plan) Priorities for Quarter Four.

The DCC apologised that the report the whole year data was not included within the report and advised us that a separate report would be forwarded to the PCC following completion as it was being redesigned.

DCC

The DCC advised us that the Force continued to prioritise investigation of priority cases such as rape and robbery, however, following a review there was increased focus in investigating other crime types such as criminal damage and neighbourhood type crime in order to increase the positive outcome rate. The focus of activity would be in areas of Hate Crime, Domestic Abuse and Modern Day Slavery and reducing repeat offenders to improve outcome levels for victims and to increase public confidence in those areas.

The use of stop search had increased by 37% when compared to the previous year as had the number of positive stops with the seizure of vehicles and Class A drugs. The increase was a direct result of an intelligence led approach in certain areas of the police.

The number of reported Hate Crime incidents had fallen which was very likely as a result of less people being out in the community due to COVID19 restrictions. The Force was focussing on raising awareness of Hate Crime on Social Media and working closely with the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) and Community Tension Group to ensure there was support provided to the communities where required. particularly in light of the recent Black Lives Matter

campaign.

Action

Although domestic related crime had stabilised, there had been a rise in the stalking crime type, primarily due to it being reported more effectively in accordance with the Crime Data Integrity Standards requirement and it was expected to increase again over the course of the year.

The level of ASB reported incidents had been on course to fall however, following the recent crisis the number of incidents of ASB had risen significantly in comparison to the previous year for the same period primarily due to a sharp increase in the number of calls relating to lack of social distancing.

The number of FCR abandoned calls had decreased to 5% in comparison to the same quarter in the previous year at 12.2%. This was mainly due to the introduction of a new 101 call menu option enabling the routing of calls more efficiently.

The PCC referred to the executive summary and asked the DCC if there was a reason for the increase in number of offences of sexual activity involving a child under 13. The DCC agreed to obtain clarity on the request.

DCC

The PCC referred to page 7 and asked the DCC to add the definition of a 'vulnerable person' linked to the crime types and the DCC agreed to amend the report accordingly.

DCC

The DPCC referred to page 8, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) and asked what plans were in place to review progress following Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary & Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recent report. The DCC informed us that the inspection had presented the opportunity to review IOM as management of offenders differed in two Force areas. A review was to be conducted with the view of establishing a cohesive Force approach which mapped into national practice with the view of reducing the amount of repeat offenders.

The DPCC queried why there had been a decrease in voluntary attendance and what actions had been taken to address the issue. The DCC advised us there had been a decrease in the number of voluntary attendees due to safety concerns in relation to COVID19. The relevant safety measures had since been implemented to ensure that it was safe for them to attend the station. A review of those under investigation had been conducted those with further lines of enquiry were invited to attend.

VICTIM CODE OF PRACTICE AND COMPLIANCE

6. We received and noted the report on the Victim Code of Practice.

The DCC informed us that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken in this area and four areas had been identified for consideration following a dip sampling process, although there only a small proportion of cases had been sampled.

Action

It had been identified that not all victims were receiving acknowledgement letters informing them that their crime had been recorded due to GDPR compliance issues. The ACC had subsequently revised the process and was monitoring the issue to ensure letters were being sent out.

Training was taking place to ensure officers had the necessary skills to identify what support the victim required to make sure victim referrals were made when required and to ensure information was recorded correctly on the Niche policing system.

The Force was focussing on victim contact and timeliness of victim updates throughout the victims journey and training was being provided to officers to ensure compliance in this area. On a positive note, the Force had a high compliance rate in relation to keeping victims updated at the end of their criminal justice journey.

Although 9% of cases dip sampled included a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), it was identified that a high proportion of victims had been offered the opportunity to provide a VPS but had not taken it up. Further work was to be undertaken to improve compliance in this area.

The DPCC thanked the ACC for his leadership in supporting victims, particularly on the Victims Board which had been instrumental in ensuring the work progressed. It was suggested that the Force Communications Team consider key profile messaging in relation to supporting victims.

DCC

As a review of Victims services was being undertaken, the DPCC suggested that it would be beneficial for the Chief Officers to meet to review funding arrangements at this stage.

DCC

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS ANNUAL REVIEW 2019/20

7. We received Corporate Communications Annual Report 2019/20 for monitoring.

The PCC and CC thanked Sergeant Seymour for his work during his deployment to Corporate Communications. They also thanked Ms Wesson for the positive changes and improvements she had made since joining the team as Head of Department.

We were advised that the Force had made a significant investment in the Corporate Communications Department and its restructure which

had resulted in the recruitment of additional resources to join the established team.

Action

Priority areas of focus for the Communications team included building trusted relationships internally with staff, externally with the media and with the OPCC Communication and Engagement Team.

Corporate Communications implemented changes in order to make it easier for the media to contact the Force for required information in the form of face to face contact or phone as opposed to email. Exclusive content had been provided to the local press and work had been undertaken to reach the wider audience through radio and television. This had resulted in better working relationship with the media as they were contacting the Force directly as a first point of contact for comment.

The quality of the Force social media content had been improved and the timing of posts had changed in order to meet a wider audience. The number of internal social media accounts had been reduced from 75 to 25 making the information easily accessible to the public. This had resulted in significant growth of the social media following over the course of the year.

The virtual Force Open Day in June? was a great example of engaging with a wider audience with over 51,000 people engaging with the Force and over 46,000 watching the videos in comparison to the 19,000 that attended in person the previous year. The team intended to run the virtual event alongside the Open Day next year should social restrictions be lifted by then.

The Force Intranet site 'The Beat' was to be redeveloped to make it easier to navigate and make the required information more accessible to staff. The development of internal communications was an area of focus for the team going forward. A dedicated Communications Officer had been liaising with staff members to ascertain what elements of communication worked best for them prior to any changes being made.

Dashboards were being developed in order to evaluate the impact of the team's campaigns and across areas such as social media in order to improve the cyclical campaign process.

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY REPORT

8. We received the Crime Prevention Strategy for approval.

The DCC advised us that research had been undertaken in order to define effective, sustainable and clear problem solving principles in order to reduce crime. The strategy was based on six areas; Opportunity, Character, Effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System,

The approach was centred on 'what works' and based on three types of crime prevention; targeting the perpetrator or potential perpetrators, victim prevention and intervention to prevent re-offending.

A crime prevention plan had been developed and was to be delivered through six key elements including the establishment of problem solving hubs to bring problem solving solutions together in one area. The Head of Strategy was working with the Force in order to provide OPCC feedback on the strategy.

UPDATE ON THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS INCLUDING DRAFT JOINT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20, THE YEAR END FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT AND THE MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

9. We received an update on the draft set of accounts 2019/20, the draft Annual Governance Statement, the Year End Financial Performance report and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Existing legislation in Wales allows public authorities to delay signing and publishing the draft and final Statement of Accounts and this had been widely adopted across local authorities and public sector organisations on account of COVID19; including Gwent Police this year. To date, the Chief Constable's Statement of Accounts had been produced and quality assured. The PCC accounts and the Group accounts would be produced by the end of the week for quality assurance by the Chief Finance Officer.

Audit Wales was due to commence its audit on the 8th June 2020 and that date remained unchanged with the aim of producing the audited Statement of Accounts for sign off on 29th July, before the 'normal' statutory deadline of 31st July (which could be extended up to 30th November 2020 by virtue of the impact of COVID19 allowed for in legislation).

The Joint Audit Committee would have the opportunity for initial scrutiny of the accounts at the JAC meeting on the 11th June 2020 and, following that, at the JAC meeting on the 29th July 2020.

The CFO referred to the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and advised that it was the second reiteration of the document, as it has been overhauled ahead of the 2018/19 financial year, following an all Wales best practice workshop in accordance with Chartered Institute Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) guidance. In addition to this, the AGS had been revised to include the implications of COVID19 and the impact on governance arrangements. The AGS would remain subject to change until the accounts were published.

We were informed that the AGS consisted of two parts. Part one referred to the scope of the PCC and CC's responsibilities to make sure appropriate governance arrangements were in place, to ensure appropriate accountability and to assist effective leadership. Part two referred to the undertaking of reviews to test the effectiveness of the governance framework, including the system of internal control which incorporates an internal action plan to address areas of concern identified through internal review.

The CFO informed us that the AGS was a positive document overall. Internal auditors TIAA and Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) had each granted the Commissioner and Force with the second highest internal audit rating. This was particularly significant in terms of TCBC, as historically there had been difficulty with the Shared Resource Service (SRS) complying with the requirements of the TCBC audit regime in ensuring audit recommendations were acted on in a timely manner.

The ACOR referred to the End of Year Finance Report and informed us there was a £97,000 surplus as forecasted in quarter three, which demonstrated good performance overall. There had been a number of challenges during 2019/20, such as Operation Uplift, as funding for the uplift in officers was initially unclear until year-end, when the Force was in receipt of £295,000 from the Home Office (HO). This funding was also utilised for the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF), as students had been recruited and training schools had been established to progress the PEQF.

The PCC asked for an update in relation to the funding provision of the PEQF. The CFO advised us that the Welsh Forces were contributing £2 million of levy funding to the HO and also incurring training costs. The HO, Welsh Government and Treasury concluded that confirmation of the funding costs formed part of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the interim grant funding would continue to be provided until a decision had been made. Discussions were due to place with HO colleagues, to discuss how the £1 million interim grant would be allocated across the Four Welsh Forces.

A number of committed funds had been identified and carried forward into the following financial year, to support the implementation of Force strategies and proposals.

There was an overspend on premises costs primarily due to delays in the termination of the Private Funding Initiative (PFI) maintenance contract for the Ystrad Mynach Police Station, which had taken six months longer than planned to conclude due to challenging negotiations. The PCC asked what had caused the delay in the termination of the contract and the ACOR confirmed the contract was originally due to conclude in the early part of 2019/20, following complex negotiations going back over many years. There was an

annual set budget of £1.2 million to pay for the services at Ystrad Mynach, including 'hard' and 'soft' facilities management costs. It was expected that the costs would reduce to £250,000 following termination, with the Force then paying the running costs. The budget was reduced to reflect the changes, however, negotiations took longer than expected, so the higher costs were incurred for a longer period than expected.

The overtime outturn generated a surplus in the previous financial year and a decision was made to decrease the overtime budget by £1 million this financial year, to absorb other overarching costs. The challenge going forward therefore, was the ongoing management of the costs. The online overtime system was due for launch in Autumn 2020 and should assist management by enabling live time identification of overtime costs. The Chief Officer team would be monitoring the overtime costs throughout the year, to ensure it remained within the budget.

There were issues with the recording of collaborative work and costs across the Four Welsh Forces, as highlighted in the recent Audit Wales collaborative audit. The Forces had subsequently established mechanisms to ensure collaborative costs were recorded accurately.

The ACOR highlighted the key areas of Force Performance within the report. The Force was in a good position in terms of debtors, as the majority were from the public sector and therefore of low risk. Significant progress had been made in terms of creditors and the majority were paid within the expected 30 days. The JAC continually scrutinised this area of work.

The total capital spend on new HQ amounted to £6 million and there was also a £4 million capital spend on the PFI contract termination, both of which had presented a significant movement on the reserves and committed funds position. The overall balance had reduced from £50 million to £40 million and was expected to reduce significantly this financial year.

The ACOR and CFO thanked the Finance and Legal Services Departments for their hard work throughout the year.

We received a verbal update on the MTFP. We were advised that when the budget was set last year, the overarching deficit within the MTFP for 2024/2025 was due to be £5.6 million. However, over the last few months, there had been some movement on the assumptions made in the plan. There were additional recurrent costs of over £200,000 due to National ICT programme requirements such as the replacement for the Police National Computer and Police National Database. The Force has also received £200,000 of unexpected non-current funding for the Regional Organised Crime Unit and were also expecting a proportion of the PEQF £1 million grant funding.

Although some of the assumptions were initially highlighted as risks during the setting of budget, unexpected funding had negated some of the risk by offsetting the unexpected costs. However, some of the unexpected costs were recurrent in nature and the funding received was non-recurrent, which resulted in a shortfall of £200,000 in the annual cycle of the MTFP.

Action

In order to balance the budget for this financial year, £763,000 of reserves funding was to be utilised. The cost implications of COVID19 remained a risk, as the Force had already incurred costs of £300,000 to the end of May and projected a further £300,000 in June and July with the expectation that there would be a continuation of these costs to ensure officers and staff were fully protected with the required PPE and sanitisers in the future. The costs would be funded from reserves but it was expected that the HO or Treasury would provide the necessary funding in due course.

The CFO advised us that the incurred COVID19 costs should not impact operational policing over the short term if Government funding was not forthcoming, as there was a £4 million General Reserve available and also borrowing options should it be required. However, due to the impact of COVID19, two key sources of income were at risk; the Government grant and precept funding. Government funding had been provided for the first year for the uplift of 62 officers but it was unclear as to the longevity on the funding going forward. The level of precept received could also be impacted, as there could be a drop in the level of precept collected, which up until now had been a collection rate of over 95%. The CFO and ACOR planned to work through various scenarios in order to plan for worse case scenarios in future funding.

The PCC and CC were in agreement that the £4 million General Reserve should be utilised for emergency operational policing only, whilst acknowledging COVID19 was an emergency, it was a global issue and the reserves should be kept for operational emergencies should it be required. The CC suggested a meeting to discuss a two-year robust spending plan to assess the impact on funding and the potential impact on operational policing.

CC/PCC

The CC requested an update in relation to £1 million PEQF collaborative funding for both the previous year and current financial year, as dual training with South Wales Police had only partially taken place last year and was also impact this financial year due to COVID19.

**CFO/
ACOR**

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

10. The information contained in the report(s) below has been subjected to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent's public interest test and is deemed to be

exempt from publication under section 7.

Action

JOINT STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

11.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.

TO IDENTIFY ANY RISKS ARISING FROM THIS MEETING

13.

**CFO/
ACOR**

DCC

The meeting concluded at 12:19