



West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel

Draft Minutes

2nd February 2024, Old Court Room, Town Hall, Wakefield

- PRESENT:**
- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor Eileen Taylor | - Leeds City Council |
| Councillor Barry Anderson | - Leeds Council |
| Councillor Nicole Sharpe | - Leeds Council |
| Councillor Paul Sullivan | - Bradford Council |
| Councillor Chris Hayden | - Bradford Council |
| Councillor Ann Kingstone | - Calderdale Council |
| Councillor Robert Thornber | - Calderdale Council |
| Councillor Anthony Smith | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Gwen Lowe | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Susan Lee-Richards | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Usman Ali | - Wakefield Council |
| Councillor Jackie Ferguson | - Wakefield Council |
| Mrs Joanne Sykes | - Independent |
| Mr Trevor Lake | - Independent |
- In attendance
- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tracy Brabin | - Mayor of West Yorkshire |
| Alison Lowe | - Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime |
| Julie Reid | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Wendy Stevens | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Liz Hunter | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Sharon Waugh | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Neil Flenley | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| John Robins | - West Yorkshire Police |
| Katherine Johnson | - West Yorkshire Police |
| Becky McIntyre | - Calderdale Council |
| Sharon Fraser | - Wakefield Council |
| Samantha Wilkinson | - Wakefield Council |
| Fiona Bernardo | - Wakefield Council |

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Neil Buckley and Hassan Khan.

2. To approve, as a correct record and deal with any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel held on 8th December 2024.

2.1. The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. To note any items which the Chair has agreed to add to the agenda on the grounds of urgency

3.1 The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items to add to the agenda.

4. Members' Declaration of Interests

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. Mayor of West Yorkshire's precept proposal 2024 – 2025

5.1 The Mayor introduced her report, proposing an increase in the police element of the council tax (the precept) by £13 (5.5%) in 2024/25 for a band D household. Due to the financial and operational pressures on West Yorkshire Police (WYP) and the continued needs of the community, she considered a £13 increase to be the only viable option.

5.3 The Mayor assured Panel that in making her decision she had put substantial effort and resource into a consultation process to gather views and understand how the people of West Yorkshire felt towards the proposed increase. She described how 71% of those who responded understood the pressures faced by policing and had supported the increase, and explained how money raised by the precept would be used to recruit more PCSOs and contact centre staff, and channel resource into protecting areas such as child neglect which are under threat from cuts to local authority and partner agency services.

5.4 Panel asked for clarification of the McCloud remedy and its financial impact on WYP's budget. Panel were reassured that Forces were being financially supported by central government to plug the gap caused by a pension formula that had disadvantaged some retiring police officers. The Mayor added that the pension scheme was an important part of the Force's recruitment offer, and needed to be protected.

5.5 Panel questioned the Force's assumptions on inflation, and asked the Mayor for reassurance on how well stress tested the predicted numbers were to avoid any unexpected costs into the budget. Finance officers present shared their assumptions and assessment of risk around inflation, with pay inflation being the most significant

concern. Panel were reassured that where possible, risk had been removed from volatile areas, for example, the Force have negotiated a fixed price contract for gas and electricity. Spend on fuel was flagged as a potential risk, however reserves have been earmarked in case of further price inflation.

- 5.6 Panel asked further questions around the use of reserves. At 2.6%, reserve levels are now at the low end of the acceptable range. WYP's finance officer agreed that having to draw heavily on reserves was not a position the Force wanted to be in, however, she gave assurances around financial resilience. She detailed how the Force are using priority based budgeting (PBB) to address the budget shortfall and identify where savings and efficiencies can be made in order to balance the budget. The Mayor added that she continues to make the case for long term funding settlements for police forces to enable more sustainable financial planning. She also confirmed that PBB will not threaten jobs or recruitment. Panel were assured that the Force is taking every opportunity to top reserves up where possible and appropriate. Panel requested further information and detail on PBB to inform their own understanding of how the Force plan to meet the shortfall.
- 5.7 Further context was requested around CRaSH data at 4.3 on page 14 of the report, which appeared to show significant and above average increases in numbers killed or seriously injured on the roads of West Yorkshire. Representatives from the Mayor's office explained that the way that data is collected has changed and a new system is being used, the result of which shows a higher recorded increase than would previously have been the case. The recording changes include adjustments to the level of severity and the number of casualties recorded at each incident.
- 5.8 The Mayor was asked to explain her understanding of the reasons which had driven increases in incidents of child neglect. She explained that police officers who witness neglect when visiting a property can now alert social care directly, who immediately assess and triage the report. The system is new and has seen a high level of referrals due to teething issues; this is likely to settle down as officers get used to the process. Greater crime recording integrity has also driven up the figures.
- 5.9 A further question was asked around how confident the Mayor was that WYP are doing all they can to prioritise their spend, and protect services. The Chief Constable set out processes used by the Force (predominantly the PBB process) to assess threat, harm, and risk, and minimise exposure across all areas. In addition, the Force use external reviews and auditing, consider HMIC priorities, and undertake regular cost analysis against regional and national averages. The Force Management Statement (FMS) covers the process in detail, and Panel were directed to the executive summary of this document for further information.

- 5.10 Panel requested further information around the management of national threats, specifically the level of financial assistance from central government for local responses to incidents emanating from outside of West Yorkshire which then have a knock-on effect on the region. The Chief Constable confirmed that the Force does not generally receive additional money for these operations and although they can receive some special grants for significant, unforeseen pressures, these grants have been cut back. They do not receive any additional money to police protests caused by national events; this responsibility is covered by their obligation to meet strategic policing requirements. Special units cover areas such as counter terrorism, however these units have also had their budgets reduced, and ultimately, the Home Office has had to balance their own books and pass on required savings to Forces.
- 5.11 Panel asked the Mayor for reassurance around the profile of experienced officers and if she believed that enough resources were available within this officer population to train and supervise the high numbers of new recruits coming through. Panel also asked the Mayor if she was confident that high standards had been maintained in the recruitment process, considering the significant numbers of new officers. The Chief Constable assured Panel that the level of rigour within the recruitment process had if anything been strengthened in the recent rounds, and that a strong pipeline of candidates had come through. Although the significant numbers of new officers has temporarily changed the profile of the Force, he expressed confidence that there were sufficient experienced officers to see the new recruits through the training process. In addition, as the Police Uplift Programme comes to an end, this situation will stabilise.
- 5.12 Referring to the consultation process, Panel congratulated the Mayor's team on their efforts to take this out to hard-to-reach communities, and drive participation in the survey through focus groups, however, with only around 2,000 respondents out of a population of 2.3 million in West Yorkshire, Panel asked the Mayor how confident she was that the number of responses provided a true representation of views. The Mayor replied that she was very confident that her team had made every effort to broaden and increase the scope of the responses, and that the West Yorkshire response rate was still higher than that of neighbouring Force area consultations. She was satisfied that the number of responses was credible for the purposes of the consultation and that probability sampling gave representative views. In addition, she wanted to highlight that the response rate was higher than in previous surveys, and that it is very difficult to achieve high response rates for consultations. She added that an additional 163 people took part in focus groups, which by their nature are limited to small numbers of participants, but which are able to add significant value by giving context and greater detail to answers. These groups contained representatives from communities of people who have not strongly fed into consultation processes such as this in the past, such as older people, women, those with multiple and complex needs, disabled people, visually impaired people and others from the Punjabi community. The

Deputy Mayor repeated her view that they cannot go out to consultation any earlier to help increase participation further due to the timing of the settlement announcement from the Home Office.

- 5.13 Panel asked further questions around figures quoted in the report which show an increase in recorded rapes, asking if the Mayor was aware of the reasons behind this. The Deputy Mayor shared her view, that the work on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) has increased the confidence of women to report offences and that this was also the case in the reporting of domestic abuse and sexual offences. In addition, historic cases are driving increases in figures, and she believed that it was the reporting of rape that had increased, rather than the number of offences. The Mayor encouraged all Panel members to share the ‘Just Don’t’ video which her office have produced, which aims to tackle behaviour change at an early, low level.

Panel had no further questions for the Mayor on the report. The Mayoral and Policing teams left the meeting at this point to allow Panel members to have an open discussion about the precept proposal. The meeting continued in public session.

- 5.14 Despite concerns about the current cost of living crisis, Panel were unanimously supportive of the precept proposal. Three recommendations and commitments were discussed and collated to form an official response to the proposal. These were that the Mayor commits to:

- Commence early discussion with Panel about the quality, content and format of future budget consultations, including setting up a small working group with Panel members to look at best practice across other PCC areas with the aim of providing the public with more detail of the implications of different funding options.
- Provide the Panel with a future report on Priority Based Budgeting to assure them that required efficiencies are on track to meet future funding shortfalls.
- To report back mid-year on the reserves position providing assurances that these are kept at a sustainable level.

5.15 RESOLVED

5.15.1 That the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel support the Mayor’s proposed increase of 5.5% on the policing and crime component of council tax, equating to £13 for a band D property in 2024/25.

5.15.2 That the Mayor’s office commence early discussion and work with Panel around the quality, content and format of future budget consultations.

5.15.3 That the Mayor provides the Panel with an executive level report on Priority Based Budgeting to assure them that required efficiencies are on track with projections to meet future funding shortfalls.

5.15.4 That the Mayor reports back at the mid-year point on the reserves position to provide assurances to Panel that these are kept at a sustainable level.

6. Process and Role of the Police and Crime Panel

6.1 Panel were presented with a report which explained the required process to be undertaken in response to the Mayor's precept proposal.

6.2 RESOLVED

6.2.1 Panel noted the report.

7. Mayor's Annual Report 2022 23

7.1 The Mayor presented her Annual Report for 2022/23 which sets out the work she has undertaken over this time and demonstrates the progress made against the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan. The Mayor is required to produce an Annual Report for each financial year and personally share the draft with the Panel for review and comments before it is published.

7.2 The draft report originally came to the December Panel meeting as scheduled in the forward agenda plan, however, the Mayor was unable to attend due to circumstances outside of her control. As the Mayor is legally obliged to personally present the report, she did so at the meeting, and Panel members were given the chance to question her directly.

7.3 Panel members had commented and given feedback on the report after its presentation by the Deputy Mayor at the December 8th Panel meeting. This feedback had been incorporated into the final version to Panel's satisfaction, and no further comments were made.

7.11 RESOLVED

7.11.1 Panel noted and welcomed the Mayor's finalised Annual Report for 2022/23.

8. Mayor's Response to any current issues

8.1 The Mayor reported that she had held her first Mayor's Question Time in Wakefield on January 25th in Wakefield, with over fifty people attending. She shared the dates of her

next two sessions - 5th February in Halifax, and 22nd February in Leeds, and welcomed the attendance of Panel members where possible, asking them to share details with their constituents. The Mayor has recently met with ambassadors from Girl Guiding and has invited them to attend a session as youth advocates for democracy.

- 8.2 The Deputy Mayor recently attended a Vision Zero Parliamentary reception with road safety campaigner Dr Ian Greenwood. The event had good cross party support from regional MPs and positive engagement on social media.
- 8.3 The Deputy Mayor will host a meeting of the British Retail Consortium in March, where she will be listening to the concerns of members around the rise in shoplifting since the cost of living crisis, and of staff who have to face and challenge shoplifters.
- 8.4 The Knife Angel structure is now on display in the Royal Armouries until 1st March as part of the ongoing multi agency campaign against knife crime. The Deputy Mayor attended and spoke at the launch, and the Mayor particularly wanted to give her thanks to the young people from Catch, a youth programme based in Leeds who also spoke at the launch.
- 8.5 The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have been working with Dame Louise Casey to establish a Women and Girls Safety Unit which will be the first of its kind in the country, and will take a public health approach to tackling the challenges faced.

9. Published Key Decisions

- 9.1 The Published Key Decisions were noted.

10. Agreed Actions Log

- 10.1 The Agreed Actions log was noted.

11. Forward Agenda Plan

- 11.1 The Forward Agenda Plan was noted.

12. Complaints Received by the Panel

- 12.1 Panel noted that there are no new recorded complaints to report against the Mayor or Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

13. Any Other Business

- 13.1 There was no other business.

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be held at 10.00am on Friday, 1st March 2024 in the Old Court Room, Town Hall, Wakefield.