



West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel

Draft Minutes

3rd February 2023, Old Court Room, Town Hall, Wakefield

- PRESENT:**
- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor Al Garthwaite | - Leeds City Council |
| Councillor Amanda Carter | - Leeds City Council |
| Councillor Nicole Sharpe | - Leeds City Council |
| Councillor Paul Sullivan | - Bradford Council |
| Councillor Sarfraz Nazir | - Bradford Council |
| Councillor Sarah Courtney | - Calderdale Council |
| Councillor Robert Thornber | - Calderdale Council |
| Councillor Ammar Anwar | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Anthony Smith | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Andrew Cooper | - Kirklees Council |
| Councillor Usman Ali | - Wakefield Council |
| Councillor Maureen Tennant-King | - 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 |
| Angela Taylor | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Liz Hunter | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| Julie Reid | - West Yorkshire Combined Authority |
| John Robins | - West Yorkshire Police |
| Katherine Johnson | - West Yorkshire Police |
| Sharon Fraser | - Wakefield Council |
| Neil Warren | - Wakefield Council |
| Samantha Wilkinson | - Wakefield Council |
| Fiona Bernardo | - Wakefield Council |

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

3.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Sinead Engel.

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 9th December 2022.

2.1. The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

2.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

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

5.1 The Mayor introduced her report, which proposed an increase in the police element of the council tax (the precept) by £15 (6.78%) in 2023/24 for a band D household.

5.2 The Mayor made a statement in support of her proposal and explained her reasons for asking for the highest level of precept available. She believed that levelling the 6.78% rise was the only way that West Yorkshire Police (WYP) could continue to provide the same level of service to the public, maintain its position as an outstanding Force and continue to relentlessly focus on neighbourhood crime, in the current tough economic situation. The Mayor highlighted the impending pay award and the need to pursue the Force's recruitment programme in a difficult labour market as additional factors in her decision.

5.3 The Mayor shared with Panel that due to the difficult economic situation, her commitment retain the numbers of PCSOs would not meet the 2022/23 precept target of 566 – it will be temporarily lower at 509. She stressed however, that the money raised by the higher precept amount will temper the original prediction by West Yorkshire Police of a 134 reduction. She said that WYP would still be investing more in this area of policing relative to their budget, than other forces. Through her own budget, she has funded an additional 15 transport related PCSOs as part of her work on making bus travel safer.

5.4 The Mayor shared how she continues to make representations to central government regarding funding for the police force. She also highlighted the results of the precept survey, which ran between 16 December and 16 January, and showed that a majority

of respondents supported the increase in precept funding, and that the positive response rate was higher than last year, despite the difficult economic climate. The survey was extended this year in terms of numbers and formats, and included written, online and face-to-face feedback which the Mayor felt gave an inclusive view of public opinion.

- 5.5 Questions were put to the Mayor about her precept decision. Panel firstly asked about any work which may have been done to rule out other options, and what those options would have meant in terms of resources. The Mayor replied that in order to maintain PCSO levels, she had to go for the highest amount possible, lower options would have resulted in cuts to neighbourhood policing levels, which both she and Panel members have always believed are crucial to confidence in policing. West Yorkshire currently have a high proportion of PCSOs per £million spent, at 1.07, compared to 0.61 in Greater Manchester Police and 0.41 in neighbouring South Yorkshire Police. WYP have calculated that the additional £5 precept will mean that 80 PCSOs can be maintained in post; without it, that number, in addition to those that the Force have had to pause recruitment for, would mean that there would have 134 less PCSOs than planned. The 2024 target for new PCSOs has been reduced to 509 from 520, and the Mayor posited that a greater reduction would have occurred without raising the full precept amount. If the full amount is raised, the Force hope to be in a position to recommence recruitment the following year.
- 5.6 Panel were assured that any loss in officer numbers would be through natural attrition and a hold on recruitment.
- 5.7 Panel sought further assurances that the Mayor was on track to reach her target of 750 new police officers and staff by 2024, and that WYP were on track to recruit the required numbers into the Police Uplift Programme (PUP), despite the additional costs for recruitment and training for the new officers. Chief Constable confirmed that he was confident that the PUP recruitment target would be fulfilled, resulting overall in 852 new officers. The Mayor's target would be more challenging, because more staff were leaving versus officers coming into the Force.
- 5.8 The Mayor was asked what she thought the impact of less staff numbers would mean on operational police officers. The Chief Constable responded that as a result of budgetary pressures, WYP were currently operating at an 8% vacancy rate for staff and having to hold some vacancies such as crime scene investigators, detention officers and so on, and that inevitably this has an impact on the Force. The Deputy Mayor added however, that WYP had been operating at 10% vacancy factor for staff in the previous year, therefore she believed that there would not be a significant impact on service delivery in the coming year.
- 5.9 Panel asked for reassurances that anti-social behaviour (ASB) would continue to be a priority, if they were to agree to the increased precept. The Mayor confirmed that communities and neighbourhood policing would continue to be high on her priority list. Additionally, the Chief constable confirmed that ASB and street crime were priorities for the Force, and to show his commitment, there had been a recent refresh and refocus of the neighbourhood policing strategy and as part of this, they were

looking to see how they could return more experienced officers into this area of work. The Chief Constable went on to say that he was looking to build on the existing multi-partnership approach and engage more agencies in this work. This would have the additional benefit of reducing their own costs. The Mayor added that a recent successful Levelling Up bid meant that a significant amount of money would be being spent on infrastructure to improve safety in areas such as bus stations and parks.

- 5.10 Discussion took place about the change in recording of ASB which has resulted in a huge drop of 40% in recorded ASB. The Deputy Mayor reminded Panel that more ASB is now recorded as a crime, meaning that figures for ASB have dropped, however figures for those crimes it is recorded against have risen. The difference in figures under the two systems shows that under the old system, ASB shows an 8% reduction, however under the new system, it shows a 40% reduction. This has been a deliberate change in strategy, to give more focus to ASB incidents.
- 5.11 A question was asked around the numbers of officers on shift at any given time. The Mayor reminded Panel that the Chief Constable was not present to answer operational questions, and that it was her role to hold him to account for those. The Chief Constable added that operational details such as this could not be shared due to their sensitivity, but that he was confident that the shift patterns were appropriate and robust. The Mayor added her thanks to all police officers working shifts, and recognised the impact that such patterns can have on their health and their family lives.
- 5.12 A point was made about the lack of support for the increased precept from those in the highest council tax band, which indicated that it was not a universally supported measure. The Mayor acknowledged this, and replied that the number of respondents from the highest band was so small to have made it statistically insignificant.
- 5.13 The Mayor was asked if she was confident that a robust energy efficiency strategy was in place in WYP, to address these substantial costs to the Force budget. Examples were given of small potential changes, such as lighting, which has a short payback period of around 12 months. Panel sought assurance that the Mayor was satisfied that capital investment and energy plans had taken all energy saving opportunities into account. The Mayor was confident that every avenue was being explored to convert the Force estate to renewable energy, however there were areas where this was not currently possible, for example, the conversion of patrol cars to electric vehicles.
- 5.14 The Assistant Chief Officer shared information around the increase in utility costs for the Force, which currently stand at 83% for electricity and 300% for gas, so finding ways to be more energy efficient was high on their agenda. The Director of Estates and a newly recruited Sustainability Manager are negotiating with YPO and other suppliers to achieve the highest level of savings and efficiencies possible, with solar panels and new energy efficient cladding being installed wherever possible and that progress could be shared with Panel where appropriate.
- 5.15 The Mayor was asked to expand on the key focuses of 'priority budgeting' and its implications. The Assistant Chief Officer explained that this was a tool used in 2022,

which takes baseline activity and outputs, and looks at ways in which these can be achieved more efficiently and with better outcomes. The Force then make a decision as to whether to decrease or increase activity in these areas. £3m of savings are built into achieving the desired outputs in this work. Panel asked if updates on the programme could be built into the forward agenda plan.

- 5.16 The Mayor was asked how she felt about the position and viability of the Force reserves. Panel were informed that reserves have been built up due to the difficulty of recruiting staff.
- 5.17 A question was asked about the assumption in the financial plan that WYYP would be receiving only a £5 precept in 2 years time, which is lower than would be expected and could impact significantly on spending power. The Chief Constable explained that the Force plan for the lower amount because they do not want to make any assumptions that the political leadership at the time will levy a higher amount.
- 5.18 The Mayor was asked if she was confident that using an unusually higher amount of reserves in this budget would not leave the Force vulnerable if it had to respond to unseen emergencies. The Chief Constable acknowledged the concern, but reassured Panel that the mid-term financial forecast was as optimistic as could be expected, and that the Assistant Chief Officer was working hard to monitor and adjust reserve assumptions as necessary. The Deputy Mayor added that she had raised the issue of finance directly with the new Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, Chris Philp, using benchmarking undertaken by CIPFA which showed that all equivalent forces are in the same position and using reserves this way.
- 5.19 The Mayor was asked if she thought that energy efficiency efforts would be hampered by PFI arrangements. The Assistant Chief Officer responded that joint arrangements would have to be in place to undertake projects, and these would be discussed in the existing quarterly meetings. She did not however believe that the existence of PFI would have a detrimental effect.
- 5.20 Discussion took place about the point at which a drop in approval for the precept in the survey results would have an impact on the Mayor's plans to set the precept. She was also asked to look at ways to include a supplementary question for those who did not support the precept, to ascertain whether this was due to personal finance worries or because of a lack of confidence in the police. The Mayor was certain that the reason that people did not support the raise this year was because of the cost of living pressures, however she did undertake to consider gathering further intelligence in the next survey.

The Mayoral and Policing teams left the meeting at this point to allow Panel members to have a frank discussion about the precept proposal. The meeting continued in public session.

- 5.21 Despite concerns about the current cost of living crisis, Panel were unanimously supportive of the precept proposal. A number of recommendations and asks were

discussed and collated to form an official response to the proposal. These were that the Mayor commits to:

- Continue to prioritise neighbourhood policing; building and developing the problem-solving skills needed to tackle community crime and anti-social behaviour, and ensure that PCSO numbers are not reduced below 509.
- Ensure that along with increasing sustainability, the Energy Management Strategy exploits all opportunities for delivering energy cost efficiencies enabling savings to be reinvested within the overall budget
- Provide the Panel with a half year revised MTFE to assure them that required efficiencies are on track in line with projections.
- Engage in early discussion with Panel about the content and format of future budget consultation with the aim of providing the public with detail of the implications of different options and seeking to understand the reasoning behind people's choices

5.22 RESOLVED

5.22.1 That the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel support the Mayor's proposed increase of 6.78% which equates to £15 on the policing and crime component of council tax for a band D property for 2023/24.

5.22.2 The Mayor to provide Panel with assurances that both sustainability and efficiencies are being addressed and share the Energy Management Strategy

5.22.3 Regular updates on the 'priority budgeting' programme to be incorporated into the Panel's forward agenda.

5.22.4 The Mayor to look at asking a supplementary question in the precept survey if respondents did not support the raise, to understand their reasons for this.

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.

6.6 RESOLVED

6.6.1 Panel noted the report.

7. Mayors Response to Current Issues

7.1 Following news reports of the prosecution of former Metropolitan Police officer David Carrick for sexual offences, the Mayor reassured Panel that she was in conversation with the Chief Constable regarding the impact this could have on the Force.

7.2 The Deputy Mayor updated the Panel on the world leading 'WalkSafe' app, launched recently in Bradford. The app enables family members to track a journey home, and links to the night and taxi marshals and the Ask for Angela scheme. The app will be rolled out through West Yorkshire and shared on to other counties.

7.3 The bus safety app has been very well received and includes a link to PCSOs who are based on buses or at bus stations. The Department of Transport have asked to use the app rollout as a case study nationally.

7.4 The Mayor updated Panel on the Stalking Advocacy Service which was established as a priority following her election in May 2021. The service has had a high level of referrals (470) and currently has 70 active cases.

7.5 Panel asked the Deputy Mayor about the action agreed in the December meeting to include statistics from comparable police forces in future performance monitoring reports. The Deputy Mayor replied that this would be effective from March's Performance Monitoring report.

7.6 The potential upcoming change to police recruitment entry routes, which could re-introduce a non-graduate entry route was raised. This could have significant implications for recruits currently going down the degree apprenticeship route, and for FE institutions who have set up the degree course infrastructure but the position is still not known.

8. Published Key Decisions

8.1 The published key decisions were noted.

9. Agreed Actions Log

9.1 The Agreed Actions log was noted.

10. Forward Agenda Plan

10.1 The Forward Agenda Plan was noted.

11. Complaints Received by the Panel

11.1 The Panel noted that there are no new recorded complaints against the Mayor or Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

11.2 Panel also noted the Local Government Ombudsman’s recently published decision in response to a complaint made against the Police and Crime Panel. The Ombudsman concluded that there was no complaint to answer, as there was insufficient evidence of fault in the way the Police and Crime Panel’s decision was reached.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 Councillor Sarah Courtney highlighted very positive feedback she had recently received from the Director of Public Health in Calderdale Council, regarding the excellent the partnership working between the council and WYP on suicide prevention programmes.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

13.1 The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be held at 10.00am on Friday 10th March 2023, in the Old Court Room, Wakefield Town Hall.