**Item 3**



**West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel**

**Draft Minutes**

**7th February 2025, Old Court Room, Town Hall, Wakefield**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Eileen Taylor - Leeds Council (Chair)

Councillor Lynn Masterman - Wakefield Council

 Councillor Nussrat Mohammed - Bradford Council

Councillor Chris Hayden - Bradford Council

Councillor Brenda Monteith - Calderdale Council

Councillor Shazad Fazal - Calderdale Council

Councillor Anthony Smith - Kirklees Council

Councillor Gwen Lowe - Kirklees Council

Councillor Nicole Lloyd - Leeds Council

Councillor Andrew Carter - Leeds Council

Councillors Jackie Ferguson - Wakefield Council

Mr Trevor Lake - Independent

Mrs Jo Sykes - Independent

In attendance

Tracy Brabin - Mayor of West Yorkshire

Alison Lowe - Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

Wendy Stevens - West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Robert Forrest - West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Damon Lawrenson - West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Sharon Waugh - 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

Rebecca Westerman - Wakefield Council

**1. Acceptance of apologies for absence**

 Apologies were received from Cllr Celia Hickson.

**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 13th 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**

3.1There were no urgent items to add to the agenda.

**4. Members’ Declaration of Interest**

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**5. Determining the PCC Component of the Council Tax Process and Role of the Police and Crime Panel**

5.1 The report setting out the process and role of the Police and Crime Panel in relation to the review of the Mayor’s Precept Proposal was noted.

**6. Mayor of West Yorkshire’s Precept Proposal 2025/26 - Determining the PCC Component of the Council Tax**

6.1 The Mayor introduced her precept proposal. Her Interim Director of Finance set out the challenges that are being faced along with how an increased precept would help to address the funding shortfall and support the Mayor’s ambition to be the safest place in the country.

6.2 Panel asked if the built-in assumption of a 2% PO pay increase was realistic and, as pay is such a large part of the police budget, how this would be dealt with if the increase is above 2%.

6.3 Katherine Johnson responded that they were content with the level built in and the pay award would not come into effect until September; they would take £2.5m from the revenue pressures reserve should the Government not cover any additional increase. The DMPC confirmed that previously the Government have provided funding for anything above the planned increase, and she also pointed out that she is aware that the NPCC is currently asking for a pay award greater than 2%.

6.4 Panel commented on the continued heavy reliance on reserves to plug funding deficits with the level of 2.5% which is at the very bottom end of ‘ideal’ (2.5% – 3.5%) and pressures are getting greater. Panel asked if the Mayor was comfortable that that is sufficient reserves this year and going forward and how West Yorkshire compares with similar forces.

6.5 Katherine Johnson responded that they were comfortable with the level of 2.5% and the current strategy, and that most forces were doing the same. She explained that they have added to the revenue pressures fund during the year for this reason and this is the pot that has the biggest pressure. Katherine commented that the PBB plan aims to have a trajectory of stepping down to a balanced point and zero use of reserves.

6.6 Panel questioned the Mayor on the outlined reduction of PCSOs and detention staff and how such a such a reduction would impact on the achievement of the aims of the Mayor’s police and Crime Plan.

6.7 The DMPC responded to say that this is the reality of financial situation. Other forces are feeling the same pressures and many are cutting all, or significant numbers, of PCSO’s.

6.8 The DMPC stated that the funding cut for PCSO’s is just over £4m in next 12 months. She went on to comment on the recent Government announcements of £200m to boost neighbourhood policing with £8.5m allocated to West Yorkshire. It was noted that this has not been included in the MTFF as there is not detailed information about the funding (ie, is it one-off, year-on-year etc) or the criteria attached to the spend and are waiting for further detail from Government. The DMPC did express her hope that this would negate the need to reduce PCSO numbers over the coming year.

6.9 Panel raised the current ringfenced CSP fund and pointed out that no inflationary rises since 2012 has in met a cut in real times. The DMPC stated that the funding cements the relationship with local authorities but if the Mayor were to increase the funding, it would mean a cut in commissioned services, eg ISVA’s/IDVA’s. Whilst the ringfenced funding has remained the same there are other funding pots that are drawn down and that the CSP’s can bid into. With the Mayor’s wider role, she can also be flexible with other funding pots, eg using BSIP to fund PCSO’s on the buses.

6.10 The Mayor was asked about the budget consultation and if she believed it was robust and representative and if there was any concern about the reduction in those that support the increase this year.

6.11 The Mayor’s Engagement Officer was asked to explain the work that had been undertaken. It was noted that the data shown in the report refers to the online and postal data. There was also a significant amount of in-person work designed to support the and postal consultation. Over 500 people were spoken to, and there was a specific aim to speak to younger people, to balance representation of audience. There were five different events held in high footfall areas and the public were keen to discuss the funding and policing priorities.

6.12 It was further explained that there was reassurance around the validity of the results and that to get a representative survey in West Yorkshire within a 5% confidence error, there would need to be 666 people responding, and the result was much higher than that. The postal survey is a random survey sent to addresses across West Yorkshire. Whilst the online numbers were lower than last year, they were the same as the year before that and it would seem that last year might have been a one-off spike.

6.13 The Mayor thanked her team for the consultation work in freezing temperatures, and testament to residents wanting to engage in the conversation that they came out in these low temperatures.

6.14 Panel raised the issue of the revenue reserves for PFI which is shown at the same level throughout the MTFF period. The Mayor was asked for assurances that this is regularly reviewed and remains sufficient. Katherine Johnson explained that this level has been built up over a number of years for when the Government grant drops off. She assured Panel that they are happy with the current position and that it is reviewed every year.

6.15 The Deputy Mayor confirmed that Police Officer numbers would be maintained at current levels for the next four years with no planned increase. She explained that there has been an uplift (PUP) over last 3 years with funding from the Government and to qualify for reimbursement of the PUP they are required to maintain numbers. That means that with increased costs it is necessary to reduce staff numbers instead, impacting on PCSO’s.

6.16 The Deputy Mayor assured the meeting that if the £14 increase was approved, with the coherent plan for achieving further efficiencies means that a balanced budget will be achieved. Furthermore the £8.5m from Government gives hope of improvement for neighbourhood policing. Panel were assured that the Mayor and DMPC will be constantly looking for ways to achieve this with minimal cuts.

6.17 Councillor Carter asked the Mayor if she believed that the funding spent on EDI posts was more important than funding PCSOs?

6.18 The Mayor responded that it was not a question of either/or, but the Mayor’s mission is to have a police force that reflects the community that it serves.

6.19 The Chief Constable commented that because of good management and financial prudence there still remains more frontline officers and PCSO’s in WY than many other forces.

6.20 In conclusion, the Mayor made it clear that she does understand the difficulty of this increase and the real pressures on families. She commented that her wider responsibility is to ensure that the local economy grows, and she is using her wider role in other ways to help people to keep money in their pockets, such as the Mayor’s Fares. She stressed that there is public support for the police, and the public understand the risks in the job and the need to fund it properly.

**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.**

6.21 Panel discussed the Mayor’s proposal in the context of the discussion that had taken place.

6.22 Concerns were expressed about the impact of the increase on members of the public, but Panel also accepted the reality of the funding situation for policing. Panel acknowledged that to enable the Mayor to achieve the aims in her Police and Crime Plan the police need the additional resources to deliver and to improve the base budget in the longer term.

6.23 A vote was taken and the majority of Panel members agreed to support the Mayor’s proposed increase of 5.6% or £14 on a Band D property, subject to the commitments set out below.

 That the Mayor will:

6.23.1 Work with West Yorkshire Police to retain and increase the numbers of PCSO’s where funding allows

* + 1. Update the Panel on the progress of Priority Based Budgeting, ensuring that the necessary efficiencies are on track to meet projected funding shortfalls. Additionally, outline contingency plans if these efficiencies are not achieved
		2. To report back mid-year on the reserves position providing assurances that these are maintained at a sustainable level and reduce the reliance on reserves going forward
		3. Initiate the 2026/27 budget consultation early, providing an extended timeframe and continuing to aim for wider engagement from all community sectors

**6.24 RESOLVED**

**6.24.1 On the basis of the commitments accepted by the Mayor, which are set out above, the Panel agreed to support the proposed increase of 5.6 % which equates to £14 on the policing and crime component of council tax for a Band D property for 2025/26.**

**7. Mayor’s Response to any current issues**

7.1 The Mayor reported that she recently gave evidence at select committee for Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government where she made the case that devolution provides greater opportunity to grow the economy and regional mayors with the right powers and freedoms, are key to this. Mayor Brabin reported that there was discussion with the Committee as to what is needed by Mayors to ensure this.

7.2 The Mayor reported that there will be a launch of the Police and Crime Plan on 24th February as part of the VRP Showcase and Panel are invited to that.

7.3 It was noted that the Safer Communities Grant round 7 closed on 13 Dec with a record-breaking number of applications and the outcome of the awards will be announced on 17th March. Round 8 will open on 2nd June to 2nd July and awards will then be made in October.

**8. Published Key Decisions**

8.1 The Published Key Decisions were noted.

**9. Agreed Actions Log**

9.1 The updated Agreed Actions Log was noted.

**10. Forward Plan**

10.1 The Forward Plan was noted.

**11. Complaints received by the Panel**

11.1 The update report was noted.

**12. Any Other Business**

12.1 There was no other business raised.

**13. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

13.1 The next meeting of the Police and Crime Panel will be held at 10.00 am on Friday, 7th March 2025 in the Old Court Room, Town Hall, Wakefield.