**Meeting: Policing Accountability Board**

**Venue: Police Headquarters, Carmarthen**

**Date: 28th February 2024**

**Time: 13:30 – 16:30**

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| **Members:** | Dafydd Llywelyn, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC)  Dr Richard Lewis, Chief Constable, (CC)  Edwin Harries, Director of Finance (DoF)  Carys Morgans, Chief Executive, OPCC (CEX) |
| **Also Present:** | Inspector Gemma Starkey, Staff Officer (GS)  Lowrie Proctor, Senior Manager Performance and Analytics (LP)  Neil Evans, Business Manager, OPCC (NE) |
| **Observers:** | Police and Crime Panel Members  Town and Community Councillors  OPCC Volunteers (including Victim Engagement forum members)  Members of the Public  Force Officers and staff |

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| ACTION SUMMARY FROM MEETING ON 26/10/2023 | | |  |
| Action No | Action Summary | To be progressed by | Progress |
| PAB 171 | CC to establish whether PCSO’s or Police Officers will attend Aberystwyth University once a week to speak to students. | Force | **Complete –** The Force have met with representatives from Aberystwyth University and arrangements are in place to meet with Students. Further discussions are planned with a view to encouraging recruitment to the Force. |
| PAB 172 | A clear message to be communicated to the public regarding when to ring 101 and to be visible and circulated by the Open Doors event on 15th November. | OPCC/Force | **Complete –** a message was shared at the Open Doors event in November. |
| PAB 173 | Performance presentation slides to be circulated to attendees on request. | OPCC | **Complete –** the performance presentation slides were circulated from the meeting. |
| PAB 174 | PCC will speak to Llamau regarding children going missing frequently and repeatedly from school. | PCC | **Complete –** The PCC met with Llamau and highlighted the concerns in relation to children going missing frequently and repeatedly from school. |

***Part 1***

1. **Apologies and Introductions**

The PCC welcomed members to the Policing Accountability Board and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

1. **Community Questions**

The PCC thanked attendees of the meeting for submitting questions in advance and welcomed any further questions.

**Q.** With cuts to PCSO budgets centrally how is this affecting our force area? Have we already, or are we expecting to see a drop in the number of PCSOs in any of the four counties, and in Carmarthenshire in particular?

**A.** The PCC said that there has been a cut in funding but added that a commitment has been made to maintain the current levels of PCSOs which post 1st April 2024 will be 132 across the Force area. The PCSOs are a significant part of the Neighbourhood Policing structure and invaluable to the engagement with public and building trust and confidence in the service.

**Q.** What are your visions for Pembrokeshire communities?

**A.** The CC advised that the vision is to respond to the Police and Crime Plan to ensure issues within communities are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. The PCC advised that he is the bridge between the police and the community and ensures that there is a visible and accessible police force. In support of this during the most recent budget setting round the PCC made requests to safeguard PCSOs as they are the cornerstone of the Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

**Q.** It has been suggested that victims do not feel safe in Haverfordwest, particularly domestic abuse victims?

**A.** The PCC said that there has been investment in the CCTV systems with 160 cameras in 25 towns and the police systems are being used to detect and solve crime. CCTV can be involved in resolving up to 10 crimes a day and this should allow people to feel safe in their communities.

**Q.** What is on the agendas or in the plans for budget and the economy, and what proposals do you have for Pembrokeshire’s communities in the future?

**A.** The CC said that investment in systems is vital for the continued success of the Force. In comparison to other areas, residents are playing less for policing services. The Force area, however, does present a set of unique problems for the service. For example, it would not be feasible to have only one custody like Gloucestershire. Due to the size of the areas 6 or 7 custody suites would be the optimum number. The PCC advised that 95% of the budget goes to the Force to provide services.

In addition, there is little influence the PCC or CC can have on the local economy however they do ensure that they invest indirectly in our communities. For example, investment has been agreed in a new telephony system which will mean there will be improvements with visibility and accessibility of the Force.

**Q.** How is crime recorded?

**A.** The CC said that crime is recorded in the same ways as other Forces. When an individual calls 101 or 999, speaks to an officer or attends a station the details are collected and inputted into a system to make sure the crimes are recorded correctly. The CC noted that the individual who had asked the question had some specific issues relating to him personally and arranged for the Staff Officer to hear the concerns and provide assistance.

**Q.** Since Dyfed-Powys Police ceased to have its own dedicated helicopter in 2015, how many recorded operational requests for support have been made to NPAS at St Athan? How many times have the NPAS aircraft actually been deployed to assist Dyfed-Powys in direct response to these requests?

**A.** The CC said that during the last year assistance had been requested by the Force 2584 times and had been used 1300 times. The reasons behind the gap are due to a number of reasons including the weather or the crime being over before the helicopter is deployed. The use of drones is increasing, and they are proving to be a more suitable and cost effective way to assist the Force.

**Q.** Is the decision whether to invest in a dedicated helicopter, one taken by the PCC/CC or is it the responsibility of Central Government?

**A.** There is the option of Police Force’s to invest in their own helicopter if they wish, however a decision would need to be made on whether it would be the most cost effective option in terms of usage. The current dilemma nationally is there is a need to invest in the helicopter fleet, however the Home Office are not forthcoming with the capital funding that is required to improve the fleet. Ultimately it would be a collective decision by the PCC and the Home Office to invest in a dedicated helicopter.

**Q.** Can we share services with the Air Ambulance?

**A.** The PCC advised that an Air Ambulance is unlikely to be able to help and a more suitable alternative maybe linking in with the search and rescue operations of the coast guard. However, it is unlikely to be pursued due to the differing nature of services.

**Q.** What are you plans for the School Liaison Officers after this academic year?

**A.** The PCC said that it was disappointing the funding from Welsh Government had ceased which amounted to circa £300k. As the service had been agreed to continue to be funded until the end of the current academic year, it would be for the new PCC following the elections in May to decide what they wished to do in this area. The PCC continued that there is an opportunity to consider how the service could look in the future if it continues and there are possibilities to extend to further and higher education establishments.

**Q.** Why is there another re-organisation of the Force being undertaken?

**A.** There have been previous re-organisations undertaken but there is a need because crime is changing and demand for services has increased by 30%. The last re-organisation was 12 years ago and since then there have been significant changes in society and the way in which partner agencies deal with issues. This has seen the police step in to help, an example of this is assisting individuals with mental health issues. With the new Right Care Right Person approach in being this will negate the need for the Force to step into areas that they are not the most appropriate organisation to do so. This will create capacity to detect and solve more crime.

1. **Force Contribution to National Measures**

The PCC welcomed Lowrie Proctor to the meeting to who provided an overview on the Force Performance against National Measures. LP advised that the data contained within the report was to the period up to and including December 2023.

The CC advised that he is the national lead on the drugs and performance portfolios. The CC noted that there is an issue currently where the government whilst setting worthy targets there are now bolt on measures that require reporting on the national system due to different people having different priorities.

LP said that the national measures look at more holistic issues such as homicides, serious violence, neighbourhood crimes and county lines at the highest level and this information is published on the PCC’s website.

The PCC noted that there have been slight increases against some of the measures and this is monitored. There are some areas where the Force is described as an outlier, which means the Force is deemed to be not performing well in comparison to other forces. This can result in contact from the Home Office who wish to have an explanation of the performance in that specific area.

In response to a question from the public on whether modern slavery is included as a measure the PCC advised that it is not collected for the national measures but is monitored internally.

1. **Force Performance Against Delivery of the Police and Crime Plan**

LP provided an overview of Force performance against the Police and Crime Plan. The PCC noted that there were a large number of slides highlighting performance and would pick some headline statistics for discussion at this meeting. The PCC said that there had been issues in the past following the migration to the new NICHE system, but this was now settling.

The PCC asked why the Dyed-Powys reporting system was not compatible with South-Wales and Gwent Police. This is because during the transition to NICHE it was found that North-Wales and the North West Police Forces database architecture was more suited to Dyfed-Powys and that they were further ahead in progressing to merge with the national Minerva system in the future.

The PCC asked what the Force is doing to improve the response times to 999 calls. The CC advised that it is difficult to justify the first two seconds of a call because it is the time between the caller dialling 999 and the call being transferred to Dyfed-Powys. Average call answering times are improving and this is as a result of additional resources. CC further advised that given the geography of the Force area it is deemed good performance to attend an immediate call on average at 15 minutes.

The PCC asked how the Force is encouraging people to use digital contacts rather than the more traditional ways. The CC advised that there have been nearly 16,000 contacts through the single online form, but this hasn’t correlated with a reduction of 101 calls. It has in effect opened up an additional contact opportunity for the public.

The PCC requested an update in relation to offences of theft and what preventative action is being undertaken. The CC advised that preventative work is being undertaken by Neighbourhood Policing Teams and confirmed that there were 790 crimes, but this isn’t a large amount in the wider context. However, the number has increased mainly due to the cost of living crisis where people have been committing the offences to feed themselves. The Force is working with retailers and providing crime prevention advice.

The CC advised that generally there appears to be a reduction in crime but with a caveat that figures may not be truly correct due to the change in computer system and also a change in counting rules.

The PCC asked for clarity in relation to the change in counting rules. The CC advised that the biggest change was in relation to instances where there are a number of different crimes reported at the same time. Following the change in counting rules it is now only the principal crime that is recorded. The CC assured the PCC that all other crimes would be investigate but not counted.

***Part 2***

1. **Previous minutes and actions**

The previous minutes and actions from the meeting held on the 26.10.2023 at Aberystwyth University were deemed to be accurate and correct. The PCC added that any amendments should be directed to the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

1. **Matters arising from Policing Board scrutiny focus themes**

Nothing was raised during the meeting.

1. **Finance**

The DoF gave a presentation on the Force financial position for 2023/2024 and advised that finances are intrinsically linked to risk including those operational risks. The DoF further confirmed that the budget is managed to ensure maximum operational capacity to allow the CC to deliver the priorities contained within the Police and Crime Plan.

There had been a number of pressures that had caused concern including a double digit inflation increase due to the cost of living crisis and energy costs rising from £800k to £2.2m overnight. In addition, a pay increase of 2.75% had been budgeted for but the actual increase was 7%. However, the pay award was accompanied by an additional £2.3m in grant from the Home Office to cover the pay award costs.

Overall as it currently stands there is likely to be a circa £5.4m underspend at financial year end. Some of the key points that will lead to this underspend include £733k due to increased officer resignations and transfers, £569k due to holding police staff vacancies as part of the force review, £879k due to lower voluntary redundancy and early retirement cases, additional income of £150k from the economic crime team and an additional grant awarded for the proactive recruitment of police officers.

The DoF concluded that the financial situation was very positive considering the challenges faced this year.

The PCC noted again the issue of officer resignations and requested he is kept up to date on the work of the recently appointed retention officer.

The DoF advised that there is a significant amount of work being undertaken in relation to the closure of accounts for 2022/2023, setting the budget and medium term financial plan for 2024/2025 and consideration of the future financial risks including Welsh Government funding 2025/26, pay awards for 2024, impact of operational pressures and recruitment and retention.

The PCC thanked the DoF for the comprehensive presentation and noted there were no further questions.

1. Any other business

No other business was raised, the PCC thanked all for attending and contributing to the meeting.

1. Review of Actions

There were no actions from the meeting