



West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel

Draft Minutes

24th April 2020, held virtually

PRESENT:	Councillor Mohammed Iqbal	- Leeds City Council
	Councillor Richard Dunbar	- Bradford Council
	Councillor Tariq Hussain	- Bradford Council
	Councillor Mohammed Naeem	- Calderdale Council
	Councillor Sophie Whittaker	- Calderdale Council
	Councillor Cahal Burke	- Kirklees Council
	Councillor Mark Thompson	- Kirklees Council
	Councillor Masood Ahmed	- Kirklees Council
	Councillor Amanda Carter	- Leeds City Council
	Councillor Peter Gruen	- Leeds City Council
	Councillor Stuart Heptinstall	- Wakefield Council
	Councillor Kevin Swift	- Wakefield Council
	Mrs Jo Sykes	- Independent
	Mr Roger Grasby	- Independent

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Russell Brown following technical difficulties.
- 1.2 At this point the Chair formally announced the sad loss of Councillor Alan Wassell, from Wakefield Council, and also Deputy Chair of the Panel after a battle with cancer. The Panel wished to send condolences to his family.
- 1.3 The Chair, the PCC and a number of Panel members paid personal tributes to Councillor Wassell. Councillor Wassell will be remembered for his frank but friendly manner and for his dedication and hard work on the Panel as well as his wider work within the community.

2. Minutes of the meeting held 28th February 2020

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record and 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 there were no urgent items to add to the agenda.

4. Members' Declaration of Interests

4.1 Councillor Stuart Heptinstall declared that he had a close relative who was in the process of applying to join West Yorkshire Police Force.

5. Update Report on the Response to COVID-19

5.1 The PCC presented a report on the response to the current COVID19 pandemic. This included an overview of the background circumstances and how the pandemic has affected the PCC's supporting staff and his work across West Yorkshire. The impact of COVID19 on the Police and Crime Plan was also noted and the Panel were informed that the refresh of this plan had been postponed in order to focus on supporting the police and public at this time.

5.2 The Panel were informed that due to the current circumstances, the PCC was maintaining daily contact with both the Chief and Deputy Chief Constables around crime trends and other issues on a West Yorkshire and national level. The PCC further explained how frequent contact was maintained with partners through the West Yorkshire Resilience Forum which consists of a number of partners from the Police, Local Authorities, Health Service and Public Health in addition to the other emergency services and how this provides support for critical strategic planning.

5.3 The PCC reassured the Panel that work was ongoing to support both domestic and sexual abuse support services and that there was a recognition that some individuals may be at a higher risk of abuse whilst under national lockdown.

5.4 The Panel were provided with information around the role of the PCC as the Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board for West Yorkshire and the work ongoing to address concerns around the delay and adjournment of key cases during the pandemic. It was noted that the PCC was also making representations at a national level to address these concerns.

5.5 The PCC detailed the West Yorkshire Police response that is in line with national operations around COVID19. An explanation around the four "E's" was given and the Panel were informed that West Yorkshire Police were working with the public to "Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce". The Panel were informed that West Yorkshire had issued approximately 120 fines at the time of the report and that these were issued as a final measure to those who did not co-operate with Police in complying with the national lockdown.

5.6 The PCC outlined the efforts being made by the Police to engage with the public during the pandemic and it was noted that this work was primarily being carried out by

Neighbourhood Police Teams in order to provide visibility to the public. It was noted that weekly bulletins were also being sent to key partners and elected members to provide updates around the ongoing work.

- 5.7 The Panel were informed that the PCC had launched an extraordinary Safer Communities Grant to focus on the issues around sexual and domestic abuse, mental health, drugs and alcohol and fraud. The grant round targets bids up to six thousand pounds where the funds can be used to deliver services targeting the issues outlined. The grant round would close at the beginning of May and it was noted that the level of interest in this grant round had already been high. The Panel were further informed of the support ongoing with those projects where funding had been received before the pandemic and the flexibility in moving forward with their work during this time.
- 5.8 The Panel sought further information around the reduction in workforce that was linked to COVID19 and sought reassurance that serious crimes continued to be investigated.
- 5.9 The PCC informed the Panel that sickness levels within the force continued to be closely monitored by the police. Whilst absence rates were initially higher due to those self-isolating, the Panel were informed that rates were currently between 7 and 8%. It was also noted that this was 2-3% lower than the national average amongst police forces. Support continues for those officers and staff who need to be at home. The PCC provided further explanation around how a number of home workers were able to continue working in an agile manner using equipment that had been provided.
- 5.10 It was noted that routine policing had been maintained throughout the lockdown measures imposed whilst working to the new restrictions. The Panel were informed that approximately 160 warnings were issued per day to those members of public who were not compliant with the lockdown measures, with approximately 14 enforcements per day. Whilst there were challenges in high density communities where residents did not have a garden or yard area, the continued use of the 'four E's' approach to engage and support the public was used.
- 5.11 The Chief Constable detailed the Business Continuity Plan to the Panel, outlining the technology purchase recently made in order to secure 1500 computers to enable areas of the force to work during the pandemic in an agile manner. The Panel also heard that the force were utilising technology to take remote statements from witnesses using body worn video equipment already in use. It was noted that West Yorkshire Police were one of three forces who have the ability to do this.
- 5.12 The Panel requested further information around the support being provided to victims of abuse during this time and what consideration had been given to those crimes that must be reported within a time frame of them occurring.
- 5.13 The PCC provided reassurance to the Panel that both domestic and sexual abuse were one of the main priorities of the Police throughout lockdown and that it was raised on a weekly basis with both the Chief Constable and with other PCC's in various meetings to ensure that victims were supported as much as possible. It was also noted that Neighbourhood Policing Teams had received additional specialised training in order to

be professionally inquisitive as to why individuals were out during lockdown and to spot signs of abuse. An extension to the time restrictions on certain crimes occurring during the pandemic was also confirmed.

- 5.14 The Panel requested further insight into how West Yorkshire Police were supporting officers in accessing additional PPE during the COVID19 pandemic.
- 5.15 The PCC reassured the Panel that where there was a need to invest in additional PPE to support officers that every effort was being made to source the equipment required. It was noted that costs for this would be reimbursed along with other COVID19 costs at a later date by the Government. The Chief Constable further explained that whilst there was a national shortage of PPE, West Yorkshire Police were working to ensure that all officers wore PPE when required. It was also noted that West Yorkshire Police have supported local hospitals in donating liquid repellent forensic suits to those areas where PPE shortages had been noted.
- 5.16 The Panel requested further information around current hate crime rates and queried if West Yorkshire had seen a spike in racial hate crime similar to other areas nationally.
- 5.18 The Chief Constable informed the Panel that there had been a small increase in anti-Chinese hate crime; with 2 crimes being reported since the pandemic, but that overall hate crime levels were lower than pre-pandemic levels. However it was noted that these figures were still higher than expected and that the majority of hate crime being committed was recorded as being online. The PCC reassured the Panel that all hate crime continued to be investigated and remained a priority for the force.
- 5.19 The Panel raised concerns around recent news reports that approximately as little as 5% of vulnerable children identified as eligible to attend school during the national lockdown were in attendance. The Panel requested further information regarding this information and queried if this was a concern in West Yorkshire.
- 5.20 The PCC acknowledged the recent reports and agreed that the figures published were of concern. It was noted that partnership work with schools officers was ongoing and that further work on this would be undertaken. The Chief Constable noted that whilst vulnerable children are primarily monitored through Local Authorities and Social Services, support was being provided to these partners to monitor communities through the Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

6. Commissioner's Response to any current issues

- 6.1 The PCC informed the Panel that the focus of work was currently around the COVID19 pandemic as outlined in the report provided to this meeting.

7. Published Key Decisions

- 7.1 The Panel were informed that whilst there had been a short delay, further key decisions had now been published on the West Yorkshire PCC website.

8. Agreed Actions Log

8.1 The Panel noted that actions due for completion over the forthcoming months had been delayed due to the current COVID19 pandemic.

9. Forward Agenda Plan

9.1 The forward agenda plan was noted and it was agreed that in light of the current COVID19 pandemic that this may be altered.

10.1 Complaints received by the Panel

10.1 The Panel noted the complaints report received and that a conduct matter regarding the PCC had been referred to the IOPC and would be reported back to Panel in due course.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 The PCC confirmed that he would be looking at the interim post of OPCC Chief Executive in light of the changes of circumstances and would ensure that Panel is kept informed.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

12.1 The next meeting of the Panel is due to take place on 12th June 2020, at this stage it is not known if it will be another virtual meeting, but both Panel and the public will be kept updated as the position is clarified.