

**Minutes of the meeting of General Scrutiny Committee held at Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Monday 15 November 2021 at 10.15 am**

**Committee Members:**

Councillor Jonathan Lester (Chairperson)  
Councillor Tracy Bowes (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillors Sebastian Bowen, Barry Durkin, Louis Stark, David Summers and William Wilding.

**Officers:**

Neil Taylor\* (Interim Director for Economy and Place), Kate Charlton\* (Interim Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Phil Crossland\* (Interim Service Director Environment, Highways and Waste), Sharon Bennett-Matthews\* (Head of Law and Legal Business Partner Economy and Place), Bruce Evans (Engineering Manager), Simon Hobbs (Senior Accident Investigation Engineer), Ben Baugh (Democratic Services Officer) Jen Preece ( Democratic Services Technical Support)

**In Attendance:**

John Campion, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia  
Superintendent Edd Williams, West Mercia Police

Councillor Ange Tyler\*, Cabinet Member – Housing, Regulatory Services, and Community Safety

\*denotes virtual attendee

**38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hitchiner, Leader of the Council.

**39 NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

No named substitutes were present.

**40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Durkin and Councillor Bowen both declared a non-pecuniary interest as members of the Police and Crime Panel. The Clerk confirmed that as Council appointments these were not schedule 2 interests and therefore the councillors could still take part in the discussion.

**41 MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021. Councillor Stark identified a typographical error in the minutes of the Maylord Orchard item where the word 'costs' had been used instead of 'rental incomes'. The sentence should have read:

“Maylord was cash positive and it was confirmed that *rental incomes* more than covered the running costs.”

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021, subject to the amendment as outlined above, be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

**42 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

No questions had been received from members of the public.

**43 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

No questions had been received from councillors.

**44 AN UPDATE FROM THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

The Chair welcomed John Campion, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Superintendent Edd Williams to the meeting.

The Commissioner introduced himself and gave an overview of the strategic elements of his role. Key points from his presentation included:

- The Commissioner had a non-operational role but was responsible for the Governance of West Mercia Police and how resources of £245 million were spent. The appointment of the Chief Constable was the responsibility of the Commissioner and, acting as the voice of the Public, it was he who held the Chief Constable to account.
- The Police and Crime Plan would soon be presented to the Police and Crime Panel for approval and would be confirmed by the end of the year.
- There were four strands to the Police and Crime Plan:
  1. **Victims and Survivors First.**  
Ensuring the needs of victims and survivors were understood and they were supported in their recovery. There had already been a large investment in victim services but there was still much more to do.
  2. **Secure West Mercia.**  
The policing precept was given to keep residents safe and although Herefordshire was a low crime area, this must never be taken for granted.
  3. **Reform.**  
The number of officers had been increased and more of the budget was being spent on policing hours. Resources, whether technological or physical were being reformed to ensure that they met needs and were ‘match fit’
  4. **Reassurance.**  
Although Herefordshire did experience the most serious sorts of crimes it was not in any volume and as such the County was a very safe area. However communities needed to be reassured and made to *feel* safe by the Police being active and visible in their areas.
- In response to a high volume of correspondence from the public on the issue of speeding, the Commissioner wanted to develop with the Council, as the highways authority, a joined-up approach as to how this anti-social type of speeding that caused so much detriment to the Community, could be addressed.

- Fly tipping was another area of concern for residents and although enforcement was not a statutory duty for the Police, the Commissioner was offering a grant to Councils and welcomed innovative suggestions from Councillors on what could be done to augment existing practices.

The Commissioner handed over to Superintendent Williams who spoke about the Local Policing Charter. Key points from his presentation included:

- The Police recognised that their work started in the community and looked to work in partnership with residents and businesses.
- Part of the Community Charter's remit was to work with over 120 parish councils to agree a Contact Contract which agreed how regular the contact would be with the local policing team and which would also agree 3 priorities and a realistic plan to tackle them.
- There were 6 strands to the Community Charter;
  1. Visibility and accessibility
  2. Responding to our communities
  3. Prevention
  4. Vulnerability
  5. Relationships
  6. Partnerships
- The force worked in partnership with licensees to ensure that the night time economy was supported.
- The County Lines approach taken by the force continued to be successful.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner and the Superintendent and asked for questions. During the discussion the following principal points were noted:

- The work of Community Speedwatch Teams helped with the 3 'E's' approach to speeding; education, engineering (the problem out) and enforcement
- Only a third of parish councils responded to a survey that was carried out each year by the Police Commissioner. The results of this survey were used to hold the force to account so the Commissioner encouraged Councillors to get more of their Parish Councils to respond.
- In the case of unlawful parking during school drop off and pick up hours, the Commissioner's expectation was that the force would deal with obstruction (of a highway or access point) and would work in conjunction with the Local Authority for any double yellow line parking infractions.
- Regular liaison with the Ward Member would be useful for the community safety officer as it could act as a conduit through to the Parish Councils.
- Neighbourhood Matters was the replacement service for the Community Messaging Service. To date there were 1400 people signed up to this but the Force was hoping to greatly expand this number as not only was it a way in which the Police could send out messages to the public but it was also an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and speak to their local policing team.
- Although the number of police officers had fluctuated in the past ten years it was important not to get too pre-occupied with numbers but to concentrate on having the right sort of resource to deal with the crimes being committed. In Herefordshire you were more likely to be the victim of a crime online rather than in person and therefore the Force needed to expand its online cyber presence.
- Operation Jetwing which involved days of high intensity activity in different locations across Herefordshire would help increase the Force's visibility. The operation was carried out once a month and involved executing local warrants, being visible outside of schools, listening to community concerns and knocking on doors to promote Neighbourhood Matters.
- The new Police and Crime Plan outlined the Commissioner's commitment to choosing the environmental conscious route, whether for vehicles or in the management of buildings or resources, wherever it was possible to do so.

- There had been recent publicity regarding the seizure of an electric scooter which was being used without the required insurance and in an area that was not part of a designated trial zone. The Superintendent encouraged members of the public to capture footage of any such incident on their smart phones.
- There was limited capacity in the Council's road safety team to deliver the changes the public wanted to see. The team was still struggling to implement the '20 is plenty' project that was approved by Council but were trying to deal with the backlog of Traffic Road Orders (TROs) that had built up. Budgetary pressures were a continuing concern.
- West Mercia Police would only provide funding for the purchase and installation of CCTV cameras but not the monitoring of them as it was very difficult to show the benefit of it when comparing the cost of monitoring versus the impact it had. Virtually everywhere else was at the stage where no Police Commissioner resources were used to fund monitoring. The Commissioner had given many notices that this was coming to an end and had highlighted other schemes in West Mercia where the monitoring was volunteer led.
- The Safer Streets Scheme had received bid funding of £500k which had gone towards an additional 40 CCTV cameras, increased street lighting coverage and an extension of the street pastor service.
- Elected members who felt any unease about their safety should contact the local policing team in the first instance and if still not satisfied, contact the Commissioner directly.
- Business and Rural Crime Officers had a 90% satisfaction rate for their response to burglaries. Smart water tagging had been taken out to rural locations to help prevent the theft of agricultural machinery.
- Leominster Police Station was one of the County's policing hubs and as such police officers, including the safer neighbourhood teams which were based there, were available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Counter service had been closed as in the main the public preferred to contact the police in different ways, but doorbells had been installed for members of the public to use if they walked into the station.
- Engagement vans, where the public had instant access to police officers, were also used in the community.
- The Commissioner clarified that although the fly-tipping grant of £100k was offered to 5 councils, Herefordshire Council was not constrained to apply for only a fifth of the monies. The application process was straightforward and although innovative solutions were welcomed it could also be used for strengthening existing practices. Councils had two years in which to spend the grant money.
- In response to concerns expressed by the Chairman the Superintendent reassured the Committee that the Police were supportive of community speed limit reductions, even though there were not the resources to regularly enforce them.
- The Superintendent had a road safety fund which parish councils could apply to and which could be used for, for example, the white gates going into villages. The deadline for applications to the fund was 31 March 2022.
- The relationship between the Council and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner worked well but there needed to be a shift towards more preventative work.
- In response to Councillors expressing concerns about the delays in implementing Traffic Road Orders (TROs), officers highlighted that although the process was managed by Balfour Beatty and that there were statutory requirements that needed to be adhered to they were looking at how it could be streamlined. A new map based system for TROs was being introduced and this could help expedite the process.
- A domestic abuse scrutiny panel had recently been set up which randomly selected 10 cases to review to make sure the response was right and that a consistent service was delivered.
- The Chief Constable had published internal guidance in the wake of the Sarah Everard case and had also released a statement in which he told members of the public not to be afraid to question police officers.

## **RESOLVED:**

That the Executive be recommended to consider the following:

1. The West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable be invited to the next appropriate meeting of Full Council to provide an update on the work of the force;
2. Local guidance on the personal security of councillors and how to highlight safety concerns be provided to all councillors;
3. The Neighbourhood Matters messaging service and the Local Policing Charter be brought to the attention of all councilors;
4. Consideration be given to joint communication protocol between the Council and the Police to ensure that local community safety messages are shared as widely as possible;
5. A bid be made to the Police and Crime Commissioner's initiative to support innovative projects and augment existing activity to reduce fly-tipping;
6. The Herefordshire Superintendent's road safety fund be promoted to all town and parish councils, with attention drawn to the relevant deadline;
7. Consideration be given to the establishment of a local forum for road safety, involving the Council, the Police, and other relevant partners;
8. The process for making Traffic Regulation Orders be reviewed to ensure that it is as efficient and effective as possible, including the approach to consultation and messaging with communities and road users, and with discussions with relevant agencies to remove potential barriers to implementation;
9. Consideration be given to guidance (including relevant templates) for town and parish councils to support them to develop road safety action plans and related measures, including how to access external funding streams.

## **45 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme and proposed the following items for the remaining scheduled meetings of the municipal year.

- **14 January 2022:** - Scrutiny of the Budget and MTFP
- **21 January 2022:** - Planning

A single item agenda on Planning, the scope of which was to include consideration of the use to which S106 monies and Community Infrastructure Levy were put, scrutiny of the planning service including enforcement, how environmental concerns were being addressed through the planning process and the role and scope of the planning inspectorate.

- **21 March 2022:** - Management of Capital Assets and Contract Management

Estate Management was added to the work plan for a future meeting agenda.

The Committee also discussed whether to call-in, or have as an agenda item on their work plan, the decision on the Herefordshire BID Business Improvement District. The Cabinet Member decision that was being taken was on how the Council would vote in the County led bid (excluding Hereford) as it had 23 properties that would be affected. Officers clarified that the communication had been sent out by a third party agency to all of the businesses that would be affected by this decision and that it had outlined the implications of the bid and their vote. Members were in agreement that, as a Committee, they were not minded to call in the decision but noted their right to trigger the call-in process.

#### **46 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 14 January 2022.

The meeting ended at 1.45pm

Chairperson