**Meeting: Policing Accountability Board**

**Venue: Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth**

**Date: 26th October 2023**

**Time: 10:00 – 13:30**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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)  Beverley Peatling, Chief Finance Officer (CFO) |
| **Also Present:** | Inspector Delyth Evans, Staff Officer (DE)  Lowrie Proctor, Senior Manager Performance and Analytics (LP)  Claire Bryant, Head of Strategy and Policy, OPCC  Neil Evans, Business Manager, OPCC  Ellen Jones, Quality of Service Caseworker, OPCC  Ffion Thomas, Executive Support Officer, OPCC |
| **Observers:** | Police and Crime Panel Members  Town and Community Councillors  OPCC Volunteers (including Victim Engagement forum members)  Aberystwyth University Lecturers and Students  Members of the Public |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ACTION SUMMARY FROM MEETING ON 17/07/2023 | | |
| Action No | Action Summary | To be progressed by |
| PAB 165 | The PCC to raise Glasbury community concern of speeding with Go Safe and Powys County Council | PCC |
| PAB 166 | The ACC to contact Glasbury NPT and highlight the community concerns raised | ACC |
| PAB 167 | Force to provide an update on the Engagement and Communications Strategy at the next PAB meeting | Force |
| PAB 168 | The PCC to raise duty solicitors concerns with Head Crown Prosecutor for Wales Jenny Hopkins | PCC |
| PAB 169 | The ACC to review concerns regarding to the Force incident hub | ACC |
| PAB 170 | January 2024 PAB to focus on 101/999 calls and demand | Force / OPCC |

***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.** What assurance can be provided to residents of Milford Haven, Saundersfoot, Llanelli and Kidwelly that closure of their local police stations - as reported in August - will not result in an increase in crime and antisocial behaviour owing to decreased police presence?

**A.** The CC said that any decision to close a station relates to crime data and a lot of factors are considered when closing a station. The Milford Haven Station has moved location due to the station being in a poor state of repair, the new premises now has better facilities. The station in Saundersfoot has been closed for many years and given its proximity to Tenby there no need to keep it open. The move of Llanelli Station to the new premises in Dafen has been a big success with an obvious need for the move and was made possible with a contribution from the PCC. The custody block is now in use and is a far more enhanced service. There are good transport links to the new station but there is also a base retained in Llanelli where neighbourhood teams stay within the town.

Kidwelly station has been closed for many years, due to financial constraints and Burry Port Station being 4 miles away, it wouldn’t be beneficial to re-open. There are facilities available to the Police at the fire station in Kidwelly, which are utilised by officers. The CC said that a rise or decrease in crime cannot be linked to the station closures.

The PCC added that there are a lot of properties within communities where the state of repair aren’t fit for purpose for the modern police service. The Operating model of policing has changed from when there was a Police Constable (PC) in every community and the model needed within communities is now a different one.

The PCC pointed out that the question relates to increase in crime due to Police presence.

The CC answered that this is data driven where the officers are based. He recognises that feelings aren’t captured, however there are facilities within most areas where Police can work out of. The CC expects officers to be out and about in the communities using their tablets to do work, rather than going back to work at the station. Shops and schools have closed within communities which shows the way communities are changing, he recognises there is a need for Police buildings however, when removing some stations, it doesn’t mean that the Police presence will stop.

**Q.** The PCC asked how the public should contact (Dyfed-Powys Police) DPP if there is no police station, or are the public discouraged from attending a station?

**A.** The CC does not discourage the public from attending stations and feels they should attend stations that have a front desk. The CC does not want officers to sit in stations, he would rather that they are out in their communities. The CC said that digital contact has changed, and that texts or social media is used more often than calls. However, call demand to the Force Control Centre (FCC) has not dropped, this has remained stable, if not increased.

**Q.** I understand modern policing and there are no stations near me, which is not an issue. How good are the tablets to connect in rural areas?

**A.** The CC said that the tablet signal is usually very good given the geography of DPP (Dyfed Powys Police), but it is still possible to complete forms when a signal is not detected, the form is then sent when the signal is received. There are some Criminal Justice systems that do not operate as well with the remote technology, such as the Body Worn Video (BWV). With digital evidence incredibly important, the CPS system does not accept 10-minute clips, this then has to be cut down to smaller clips and sent to CPS. This is being worked on with external agencies to overcome these issues.

**Q.** Will there be an increase of Officers at Aberystwyth Station? The doors to the station are locked which affects the town.

**A.** The CC said that there is someone at Aberystwyth Station 24/7 but that the front desk has set opening hours and that 101 is always available outside of these hours.

**Q.** Members of the public don’t like to ring 101, which is an issue that’s been previously raised.

**A.** The PCC answered that he is aware of the negative perception the public have of using 101 - that it’s ineffective and doesn’t work, however the FCC have seen a rise of 30% in calls, which doesn’t support this theory. Some of the issues raised to the PCC is that callers must wait 30 minutes before the call is answered, the data for this shows that on average, calls are answered before this time.

The PCC reminded the attendees that the Police can’t respond to incidents that they don’t know about and wanted to stress that it’s important for all incidents to be reported to 101 either by phone or through the website.

The OPCC is holding an open doors event on the 15th & 16th of November and has invited Councillors to come and see the FCC and what happens in the control room in the hope that the message will be relayed to the public and as a result are more likely to get in touch.

The PCC added that improvements have been made with 35% more funding to the force than there was 8 years ago, £40 million additional funding from the community, the number of Police officers have increased by 300 and that PCSO’s and Police staff have increased by 100 within this time.

The CC added that the 101 system was initially to be used by the Police and partner agencies, however it’s only the Police that are available after 5pm which means they deal with out of hours calls that aren’t related to the Police service. The CC spent some time with the FCC call handlers recently and half of the calls they received were for other agencies. Right care/ right person will be implemented by the force in April 2024 and if the calls aren’t policing matters, they will get passed to other agencies which will release officer’s time to do policing work.

**Q.** How can the public be made aware to ring 101 to report an incident?

**A.** The PCC said that the message is being shared via social media and engagements events such as Community Engagement Days (CED) where Members of the public are advised of this process. It is also important for the Councillors to be aware of this and to encourage the public to ring 101, crime stoppers or to report crimes by contacting the Police online. The PCC said that Station opening hours have been published and recognises the timescale would not be convenient for everyone, but with the footfall minimal, to extend the hours would come at a cost and he feels the funding can be better spent on the operational side of policing.

**Q.** Following an assault in December, I attempted to report it to the Police, however the station was closed, 101 took 12 minutes to answer the call and were unhelpful. When trying to report it to an officer in a police van, I was told that they were on another call.   
The lived experience in Aberystwyth is that low level crimes take place such as stealing trolleys and setting fire to boxes in areas where CCTV is installed, but nothing is done. There should be more officers on foot especially during school open and close times. Stations should be open longer and is no longer accessible.

**A.** The CC apologised that the Police service wasn’t accessible when the individual needed it.

There are more officers in Aberystwyth than before, and he said that there will be an announcement in the coming weeks that more officers will return to the frontline to follow the new force operating model. The CC said that there are hundreds of schools, it wouldn’t be possible for officers to be outside each one and that the Police service is being depended on in the absence of a ‘Lollypop person’.

**Q.** The Police are not accessible and unapproachable, they don’t engage with the local community and instead speak to each other with arms crossed when standing outside schools, which doesn’t provide a good message to children.

**A.** The CC said that Aberystwyth is one of the safest towns within DPP, which isn’t only down to the Police but also the geography of the town. The CC offered to provide more information on the operations within Aberystwyth if this was required.

Cllr Keith Evans noted that not everyone can access the information provided on the Police website, it is important for Councillors to transfer messages to members of the community that do not have access.

Protests are held when stations close but not when pubs or shops close, as the Police is a public service, the community feel they have the right to say if something is wrong.

He feels there is a swift response from the Police in the area.

**Q.** A PCSO or Police officer would call by Aberystwyth University Campus once a week and it was well used by the students, does this still happen?

**A.** The CC was unsure if this still happens but will establish if this is the case and will include within the actions from the meeting that will be included in the minutes.

**Action – CC to establish if PCSO’s or Police Officers still attend Aberystwyth University once a week to speak to students.**

**Q.** There should be a poster of some sort to advise people to call 101 and when it is appropriate to do so.

**A.** The PCC agreed and raised the following action:

**Action – 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 the 15th Nov.**

**Q.** I have seen it published online that Aberystwyth is the 5th most dangerous town in Wales.

**A.** The CC said that if this is true, it may be because of proactivity and the volume of stop searches conducted but would like to see the data before commenting further.

**Q.** There are drugs coming through school gates, there are initiatives in place by the force, which I am grateful for. I feel that the Police should go undercover to find out how or why doors are being kicked in regularly and to see first-hand the misuse of drugs and get information to prevent drugs coming into Aberystwyth.

**A.** The PCC said that covert officers do go undercover, and it has happened recently in Aberystwyth where a county lines group was dismantled. There needs to be a high level of offending to justify going undercover.

As a result of Op Burleigh, hundreds of drug users were identified and have since been contacted via text to provide the correct help for addiction.

The PCC suggested that officers could contact the individual for intelligence if the CC allows.

The CC said that the partnership between DPP and Ceredigion Council is working well and that a Clear Hold Build initiative is being implemented whereby the police come in, clear an area of organised crime, hold the area, and then build around community cohesion.

The PCC added that he appreciates direct challenges to the CC and himself.

1. **Force Contribution to National measures**

****

The above report was shared at the meeting. The CC has two national portfolio’s which are in relation to drugs and performance.

The performance data contained within the report covered until April 2023, when a new crime management system called Niche was being implemented in the Force. The implementation of the system had caused some disruption to reporting capabilities, however significant work was ongoing to resolve.

The Force advised that incident and crime data migration would be completed by December 2023, meaning the next PAB and the meeting would have more data to consider. LP advised that there were some issues with manual errors in the new system, which could result in the data being inaccurate.

The CC attended the National Policing Board last week, where it was noted that the satisfaction of victims within DPP was very good and that no other Police Force in the country had a better satisfaction rate currently. A discussion ensued regarding the reason for victim dissatisfaction with the CC explaining it was in relation to victims not receiving updates on their case. This was being worked on the an external company to find a solution. It was hoped that this would also reduce the number of 101 calls asking for crime updates.

The PCC referred to an example he asked to look in to where there was a whole list of activity recorded and carried out by the Force, however information had not been relayed to the victim of the crime. The PCC realised that it may not always be appropriate for all the information to be shared but that it is common courtesy to get back to individuals.

An individual at the meeting shared they had experienced this issue and knows of others that had the same experience.

LP went through the document highlighting the key elements.

Attention was drawn to the publicly available Digital Crime Performance Pack available on the Home Office website, which displays DPP’s performance in relation to other forces.

The CC explained that letters are issued to low performing forces from the Home Office. DPP had not received one of these letters and that other forces had approached DPP to seek support.

1. **Force Performance Against Priority 2: Harm is prevented**



LP provided the Board with the above presentation and went through this data in detail, including focussing on the different outcomes.

The number of crimes has remained quite static, with some rising over the summer.

The presentation shows a drop in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents, this was due to a review of the crimes and a finding that they should be recorded differently.

The CC added that the amount of people being put through the Criminal Justice System has doubled. One of the meeting attendees said that the public need to see the good work being done and where the investment is being spent. The CC agreed that the force doesn’t publish enough good news.

The PCC recognises that the lived experience is on occasions 101 calls seem a problem but according to stats the force performs exceptionally well. There is work to do regarding public facing issues and replying to victims.

There is a level of disproportionality – every single stop search of Black, Asian, Ethnic Minority is reviewed by an Inspector to ensure the stop is legitimate and legal, this is done by very few forces, if any. DPP are trying to deal with police culture and want to change the force for it to be better than it has been and acknowledges there is work to do.

The PCC added that the number of crimes reported per year is now double what is was in 2016/17, at around 45,000. He however acknowledged that not all crimes are brought to the Police's attention.  
This doesn’t necessarily mean that communities aren’t as safe, it could mean that less crimes are going unreported.

Violent crimes against a person or domestic related crimes are the largest amount with twice as many families are now being safeguarded.

It was asked if the stats could be looked at over a 10-year period, LP said she was happy to provide this information, however there would need to be an understanding of the changes in crimes such as controlling and coercive behaviour becoming a crime in 2016.

One attendee requested the slides of the presentation be made available after the meeting. The Force agreed to share the slides via email.

**Action – Performance presentation slides to be circulated to attendees on request.**

**Q.** Is there an underlying seasonal pattern in crime, with a drop in crime in October 2022?

**A.** The PCC said that the crimes do fluctuate seasonally with a surge in population over summer months meaning an increase in crime.

Lower-level crimes were being recorded as ASB rather than crimes, have now been re-categorised.

LP noted the visibility of NPT Teams in Carmarthenshire was 79% and 44% in Montgomeryshire, with a target of 75% visibility set by the force.

**Q.** The PCC asked that if the target set by the force is too high or how can 75% visibility be reached?

**A.** The CC feels that ¾ of the officer’s shift should be spent on patrol. The radios the officers carry monitor where they are and this is considered at the monthly performance meeting by the Assistant Chief Constable. The target of 75% may be too high, but the officers need a target to strive towards and not one that can be easily reached. The recent protests at Stradey Park Hotel, Llanelli have had an impact on other areas in the force with more cover being provided in Carmarthenshire during this time.

**Q.** Does the 75% patrol target mean if the officer is out of their home station and possibly in a hub or fire station, would that count as being on patrol? With stations closing, 75% may not be too ambitious.

**A.** The CC answered yes, if they aren’t in their home station they are out on patrol and agreed that 75% may not be too ambitious with station closures.

A conversation ensued regarding stop search due to the increase in November 2021 and whether it was excessive and a good use of resource. The PCC asked if the attendees would like to see more or less stop searches. The views were mixed with the positives being that knives are removed off the street and a suggestion was made that an explanation as to why a stop search was happening would be reassuring.

The CC said that when he returned to the Force in November 2021 proactivity was something he wanted to see increased. This has been delivered through stop searches. Even with negative searches, these can be explained as to why in particular areas.

Positive searches are only recorded if a knife is found when a knife is being looked for. It is not recorded if something else is found while looking for a knife. There has been a drop in stop searches recently, partly due to the protests in Stradey Park Hotel, Llanelli and the need for 24/7 policing presence.

**Q.** Have things improved at the site of Stradey Park Hotel?

**A.** The CC answered that it had improved and whilst the Home Office had pulled out, there was still a small group protesting. However there was no longer a need for a 24-hour Police presence, just passing patrol.

**Q.** Is there an increased confidence for stop search now with body worn cameras? Are stop searches more or less likely to be conducted when single or double crewed?

**A.** The CC confirmed that officers were more confident conducting stop searches while wearing a Body Worn Video (BWV) camera. He also noted an improvement in Police officer behaviour due to a video recording of the interaction being captured. Due to officer safety, most officers would prefer to conduct a stop search while double crewed.

The PCC added that he was re-assured that officers are acting with the highest level of standards and BWV supports them to do this.

A member of the Police and Crime Panel complimented the Policing response at Stradey Park Hotel had been excellent and done appropriately.

The CC thanked the member for the feedback and said that the this will be passed on to those involved after what had been a challenging time for the force.

The drugs and firearms slides were discussed with the PCC pointing out that there are less than 6 firearms related incidents a month.

There had been some noteable proactivity in Ceredigion regarding Organised Crime Groups disruption.

The PCC said that the number of sexual offences recorded each month were relatively stable and that the force was responding to rape and sexual assault by implementing the national Operation Soteria Bluestone approach.

The CC added that some forces had been able to dedicate a team for this, however this has not been possible for DPP. However, there is a small central team being set up to provide advice and supporting ensuring rape and serious sexual offences are investigated in a more victim-focussed way.

When discussing the domestic violence (DV) slide, the PCC said that it is a key force priority and that 90% of DV victims were female.

It was acknowledged that there are over 500 crimes reported but not every incident results in the crime being recorded. There is a pattern that shows an increase of DV over summer months. An increase in arrests could be seen. Attention was drawn to the use of body worn videos in providing evidence for cases.

It was noted a thousand Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) submissions for children are made each month. It was clarified that they can be referred on more than one occasion.

Multi-agency daily discussions take place, allowing prompt decision making safety planning.

There has been a lot of activity regarding missing persons, Road Traffic Collision (RTC) and serious collisions with a 20% reduction over a 5-yearperiod. The CC considered this was still too high and the police are continued to work with key partners to reduce this further.

A conversation ensued where the PCC said he was aware of children going missing multiple times from school and that the Right Care/ Right Person could be implemented in this instance.

The CC appreciated the difficult position education departments were in, the one time the child isn’t reported could be the time the child comes to harm.  
The PCC agreed to discuss the matter with Llamau, the organisation commissioned to provide debriefing services for children who go missing.

**Action - PCC will speak to Llamau regarding children going missing frequently and repeatedly from school.**

***Part 2***

1. **Previous minutes and actions**

The previous minutes and actions from the meeting held on the 17.06.2023 at Gwernyfed School, Brecon 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 referred to the papers submitted and advised that at the halfway point of the 2023/24 financial year it has been a challenging one in terms of budget management. A reduction required of £6.4 million was required despite the 7.75% increase in precept and the utilisation of £2.7 million reserves to support the revenue budget. This reflected the unprecedented budget increases the Force faced in energy costs, general inflation and interest rates. The reserve movement was further increased to £3.1 million following the year-end. It was expected that overall spending for the Force would be £1.314 million within that budget at this stage therefore requiring a reduced transfer from reserves of £1.8 million.

The budget for 2023/4 assumed a pay increase of 2.75% from September. The announcement of a 7% increase in pay for officers from 1st September 2023 and an equivalent offer to police staff was thankfully supported by additional grant from the Home Office of £2.337 million. Additional costs incurred to date in respect of Operation Cambrian of £0.280 million were fully reflected but were not now extrapolated forward for the remainder of the year following the Home Office decision not to utilise the Stradey Park Hotel to house individuals seeking asylum. The overtime over-spend of £260K included £134K relating to Operation Cambrian.

The Force had experienced a higher than anticipated number of officer leavers recently, contributing to the predicted £0.468 million underspend against police pay headings. Resignations were particularly high with 18 resignations since July, totalling 29 since the start of the year. The Force was also down in its establishments against Ports and Firearms Officers which was also contributing to a loss in grant and collaboration receipts respectively.

Force participation in Operation Safeguard had restarted in October with 8 cells being made available and earmarked for use by His Majesty’s Prison (HMP) should they be required. Anticipated income was some £36K per week which had not been reflected in the projection. An increase in interest rates along with the early receipt of the £17million Home Office top-up grant in April was also contributing some £400K in additional income receipts.

Finance Business Partners had been working with budget holders to identify further budget pressures and potential savings as part of the Mid-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) process. Force Review workshops were held by Chief Officers earlier this week. The Force were keen to utilise the underspends to reduce pressure on the 2024/5 budget through utilisation of reserves or additional Direct Capital Financing at year end to reduce borrowing costs for capital.

Police and Crime Panel Sub-Group Members received an update on progress against the £6.4 million cost reduction target delivery. Good progress was noted however with challenges being experienced across many operational and support departments because of the Review, there is no resilience to cover backlogs which were building quickly. The new records management system also presented challenges when it went live.

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

The PCC felt there was a worrying trend with the turnover of staff and officers. He was concerned that the officers on response were young in service and the rate of leavers was higher than they had been with officers leaving after only a few years.

The Force had appointed PC Wendy Janas as a retention officer in an attempt to address this issue. Officers thinking about leaving were encouraged to have a conversation with PC Janas to try and identify issues and improve learning.

There would also be a continuation of officer recruitment to keep above establishment of 1,315, assurance has been sought from the CC and DoF that this is possible and will be adhered to.

**Q.** I’m sad to hear that officers are leaving, it used to be a job for life. Is it to do with how society has changed in general, or stress combined with salary?

**A.** The PCC said it is a mixture of everything, some are leaving for better paid jobs and the change to pensions means it’s not as favourable as it once was.

**Q.** With the high number of leavers, is this a morale or national issue?   
How has the move to Dafen custody gone?

**A.** It is a morale issue that is felt nationally, and it may be the same issues being faced by all, but the main ones to affect DPP are work pressures, cost of living. The issue identified is there aren’t enough working on the frontline, and this is being felt by officers. This will be addressed by the operational model which will mean 100’s of officers going back to response and will mean more visibility.

The move to Dafen has gone very smoothly thanks to the hard work of the Force and the PCC. The working environment has improved, with positive feedback from the staff working there. There have been some teething issues with I.T. and Niche. There is also a need for more officers to man the facility for it to run at capacity.

**Q.** Will the freeze on recruiting Police Community Support Officers (PCSO’s) have a short-term impact? Or is this not a concern?

**A.** The PCC feels it may not have an impact short term, but it may have an impact mid-long term. The PCC had a conversation with Welsh Government, and it has stemmed from reduction of resourcing with the decision being made due to resourcing pressures across the whole of Welsh Government. Fifteen PCSO’s started in October, nothing further has been confirmed by the Welsh Government. This change could mean needing to look at how this affects the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

The CC feels it will have an impact and doesn’t want PCSO’s to face redundancies, it may be a possibility for some to be recruited as Police Officers.

**Q.** Will the Farming community and Rural Crime Team be affected?

**A.** The CC said that Mental Health and Domestic Violence were both included in the All Wales strategy and that the Rural Crime Team were having a positive impact on these. The CC did not see a specific link to reduce the Rural Crime budget.

1. Any other business

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

1. Review of Actions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ACTION SUMMARY FROM MEETING ON 26/10/2023 | | |
| Action No | Action Summary | To be progressed by |
| PAB 171 | CC to establish if PCSO’s or Police Officers still attend Aberystwyth University once a week to speak to students. | 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 the 15th Nov. | OPCC/ Force |
| PAB 173 | Performance presentation slides to be circulated to attendees on request. | OPCC |
| PAB 174 | PCC will speak to Llamau regarding children going missing frequently and repeatedly from school. | PCC |