

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2023 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

PRESENT:

Councillor Janet Emsley	Rochdale Council (Chair)
Councillor Kevin Anderson	Wigan Council
Councillor Russell Bernstein	Bury Council
Councillor Dylan Butt	Trafford Council
Councillor Becky Chambers	Manchester City Council
Councillor Vimal Choksi	Tameside Council
Councillor Richard Gold	Bury Council
Councillor David Lancaster	Salford Council
Councillor Steve Williams	Oldham Council (Vice-Chair)
Majid Hussain	Independent Member

Also in attendance:

Kate Green	GM Deputy Mayor
Baroness Beverley Hughes	GM Assistant Deputy Mayor
Deputy CFO Ben Norman	GMFRS
DCC Terry Woods	GMP

Officers Present:

DCI Michael Allen	Head of Professional Standards, GMP
Ian Cosh	Chief Resources Officer, GMP
Neil Evans	Director of Police, Fire & Crime, GMCA
Rachel Rosewell	Deputy Treasurer, GMCA
Dawn Royle	Director of Transformation, GMP
Kathy Stacey	Head of Strategic Communications, GMP
Jeanette Staley	Advisor to Panel & Head of Community Safety, Resilience & Neighbourhoods, Salford CC
Lee Teasdale	Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer, Governance and Scrutiny, GMCA
Gwynne Williams	Deputy Monitoring Officer, GMCA
Steve Wilson	Treasurer, GMCA

PFCP/12/23

WELCOME, APOLOGIES & CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Apologies were received from independent member Angela Lawrence, Cllr Tom Morrison, Cllr Rabiya Jiva & Cllr Laura Boyle.

The Chair referenced the recent domestic abuse training session offered by Greater Manchester Police (GMP). The range of personnel in attendance for the session was impressive, as was the level of uptake on the training offer.

Thanks were also expressed to GMP for the latest tranche of Operation AVRO which had recently taken place in Heywood.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the apologies be noted.
2. That the Chair's updates be noted.

PFCP/13/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the declaration of interest be received.

PFCP/14/23

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 26TH JANUARY 2023

It was noted that the titles of Proposed Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor needed to be updated within the attendance.

RESOLVED/-

1. That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 26th January 2023 be agreed as a true and correct record.

PFCP/15/23 2023/24 GMFRS ANNUAL FIRE DELIVERY PLAN

Deputy CFO Ben Norman was invited to present the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 headlines to the Panel. These set out the improvement programme aligned to the HMICFRS framework and introduced the 'Culture First' approach being adopted. The plan also incorporated the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), the production of which was a statutory requirement under the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework.

One of the advancements that had taken place on the new update was the incorporation of engagement activities. This had involved engagement with colleagues, external partners and the public, to invite them to have their say on the Annual Delivery Plan. The feedback received had helped in the shaping of the final Plan.

Further detail was provided on the 'Culture First' approach. Whilst GMFRS was on a positive journey, it had been agreed that the change needed to go further and faster. To support this, five priority areas had been agreed with the Deputy Mayor to expedite these improvements in organisational culture. This included amending the cultural narrative with internal communications campaigns; establishing a Culture First programme board; reviewing business as usual activities to ensure that cultural improvements were at the forefront; the development of an organisational culture-focused workplan; and the commissioning of an external review team to act as a critical lens for existing activities and emerging plans.

Comments and Questions

Members enquired about the most difficult element of culture to change within the workforce. It was advised that two of the key areas that required a significant level of focus over the next year were the continued response to the recommendations arising from the Manchester Arena Enquiry and ensuring that all staff were fully prepared to meet the challenges within the Culture First approach.

Further detail was sought on evaluation – and when it could be expected that the evaluation plans would be in place within the timelines. It was advised that evaluations had been done historically, but these would now be much more closely aligned with best practice. Assurance was provided that the evaluation plans were in-place to cover every aspect of delivery for the year ahead.

The Chair made reference to the estates programme and the status of Littleborough Fire Station. DCFO Norman would feedback to the Chair directly on this matter.

RESOLVED/-

1. That Members note the contents of the report and its appendices.
2. That DCFO Norman respond to the Chair on the status of Littleborough Fire Station.

PFCP/16/23 STATE OF FIRE AND RESCUE REPORT

DCFO Ben Norman introduced the report, which provided an overview of the HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue Report and how GMFRS was responding the findings. It was highlighted that a third of the Fire and Rescue Services were reviewed each time, and that GMFRS had not formed part of the latest tranche. They were however expected to be part of the next tranche, with a date still to be confirmed.

A gap analysis had been undertaken in conjunction with the Deputy Mayor's office, with the key points raised having been reviewed and responded to. It was noted that many of the key points raised were included in last year's and this year's delivery plans.

The Deputy Mayor was invited to address the Panel. She had received reassurance around the level of dedication the CFO had placed upon culture ahead of the next round of inspections. In reference to the Fire Cover Review, the Deputy Mayor would seek the input of the Panel in helping to shape the consultation that would go out to the public.

Comments and Questions

Reference was made to the potential for GMFRS to return to participating in emergency medical responses. It was highlighted that during the period in which the previous

memorandum of understanding had been active, GMFRS had been involved in 6133 responses, saving the NHS in the region of £5.5m, and responses were often 8 minutes earlier than they otherwise would have been.

Members referenced digital and technology improvements and increasing dependence upon these. How much resilience was in the system should these be subject to cyberattacks? It was advised that this was an area receiving significant attention within the strategic assessment of risk – technological risks were viewed collectively across the GMCA, including the borough-based authorities. This collaboration allowed for a further level of resource. Frequent meetings also took place with cyber security advisors in reference to the control room and the storage of data.

Reference was made to the harassment of staff and the reporting of incidents. Were any statistics available around this, via the medium of staff surveys or similar? It was advised that full staff surveys were undertaken annually with the next one due to take place in May 2023. In terms of statistics, more staff members had been raising concerns, but in many ways this had been seen as a positive at the current time, as it implied that staff members were now not willing to tolerate harassment that they historically may have done. At the present time there were 11 cases of significant misconduct being investigated, this represented 0.6% of the current workforce. A number of staff related to these were currently suspended from duty.

Members stated that there was a risk of reputational harm that would impact on trust and confidence in the general public, and that there needed to be positive comms in terms of recruitment to ensure that these matters did not make people wary of applying to join the fire service. It was advised that the Culture First approach being adopted was playing a vital part in this – this would include looking at recruitment material and apprenticeships to ensure that they were culture first appropriate and were event/open days hosted through a culture first lens.

The Chair drew the item to a close welcoming the increasing focus on culture, which had been noted recently with GMFRS' communications work on International Women's Day, which had been well received.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

PFCP/17/23 POLICE VETTING PROCEDURES

DCC Terry Woods was invited to provide the Panel with an update on vetting procedures at GMP for both new applicants and the existing workforce. DCC Woods confirmed to members that regular updates on this area would be brought to the Panel to provide assurance on progress made.

DCI Michael Allen then provided further detail in his role as GMP's Head of Professional Standards. He advised that GMP's Force Vetting Unit had received nine recommendations and two areas for improvement from HMICFRS. Of the nine recommendations, recent self-assessment indicated that four of those had now been met. Those that had not been met were on course to be met within HMICFRS's deadlines. Of the two areas for improvement, one had already been met, the other one could not yet be met due to an issue with the national case vetting management software.

GMP's vetting unit principally focussed upon stopping criminal infiltration into the force, ensuring that people who could not display evidence of good character were not employed, and that those who could potentially be coerced by third parties also being sifted out. It was emphasised that the vetting unit sat within professional standards rather than human resources. This was to ensure that vetting decisions were not unconsciously skewed by any need to meet recruitment uplift numbers, with the sole objective being to ensure that the applicant met the clearance criteria.

GMP's governance approach to vetting was very different to that at the Metropolitan Police, with close links to the anti-corruption unit and the main professional standards branch. On a daily basis intelligence sharing took place. The number of vetting researchers had been increased from 12 to 19 in 2022, and three specific teams had now been created within the unit.

Reference was also made to the Vetting Appeals Panel. 113 people had been refused vetting clearance in the last year, which was 8% of candidates, of those 64 (67%) of the cohort appealed this, and only 7 of these had been successful in overturning their appeal.

It was noted that vetting had a statutory footing, relating to S39 of the Police Act, through a Vetting Code of Practice. This had been last updated in 2021 and was now undergoing a further iteration.

Comments and Questions

Members made reference to previous vetting procedures and asked if these had now been superseded by the monthly background checks being undertaken. It was advised that the plans around a monthly 'health check' remained aspirational at the present time, as the national database was not yet ready to handle the sort of numbers required. Concurrent to this, the previous vetting procedures remained in place. It was acknowledged that the current procedures had significant gaps between update points, and this was why a national project was taking place to address this. Members welcomed that this had been recognised as an issue.

It was asked if the numbers had particular variants between divisions and districts. It was advised that these breakdowns were not available at present, those vetted at the initial stages had not yet been assigned divisions or branches.

It was enquired whether officers had an obligation to report to the constabulary where they have been removed from a role elsewhere, as a volunteer for example. It was advised that there was an obligation to report if any form of criminal behaviour had been involved, there was however an HMICFRS request in place that this area be strengthened. The College of Policing was currently working on guidance that was due to be finished by 30th September that would then be adopted by forces nationally.

The Deputy Mayor advised that this matter would be brought back to the Panel later in the year to advise on the work being undertaken to address public confidence issues arising from recent stories.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes the content of the report and the action taken by GMP's Force Vetting Unit to protect the integrity of the force, safeguarding both the public and the workforce from the risk of corruption and/or behaviour that does not accord with public service values.

2. That a further report updating on work to address public confidence issues in officer vetting be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

PFCP/18/23 GMP UPDATE – PLAN ON A PAGE

DCC Terry Woods and Dawn Royle were invited to present a report updating the Panel on the progress made within the 2022/23 Plan on a Page (PoaP) Improvement Portfolio and the associated programmes and projects.

It was advised that the improvements sought were progressing well. One area highlighted was the February National Police Contact table, which showed GMP as now being the best force in the country for speed of responding to 999 calls.

Since the unveiling of the PoaP and its promise of a focus on addressing the basics, a robust plan had been put in place with appropriate leadership for each programme area. The collective delivery effort across all areas had been the key factor in GMP being removed from special measures.

Further improvements were highlighted, including the recruitment of an additional 240 staff into the GMP contact centre; improvements to processing; and extra training that had been put into place, this had not only resulted in improvements, but sustainable permanent improvements.

Improvements to custody suites and general improvements to throughput in the system. The Neighbourhood Policing model had now been officially launched and the response review had now been completed, with plans around launching the model for that in June 2023.

Comments and Questions

Members welcomed the report, complimenting the robust approach taken and the willingness of GMP to take responsibility for their previous failings.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes the contents of the report.

PFCP/19/23

THE NEW GMP NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING MODEL

DCC Terry Woods was invited to provide the Panel with an overview of the new GMP Neighbourhood Policing Model launched on 20th March 2023. This was a major step forward for GMP and would form one of the major pillars for future delivery. The view of GMP was that neighbourhood policing formed the backbone of high-quality policing, it was vital to ensure robust community based policing to the residents of Greater Manchester, and there was confidence that the launch of this model would reap significant benefits for residents.

In addition to consulting politicians and authorities across Greater Manchester, 8000 responses from the public had also been received to help inform the development of the model. Key themes raised by the public had been the need for the police to be a visible presence within localities; to listen and provide forms of listening to communities when wanting to describe problems; deal with crime and anti-social issues; and the need to communicate better with communities.

It had been agreed by all that the current mix of PCSOs and warranted officers in communities did not work as hoped and needed to change. Areas benchmarked for the excellence in neighbourhood policing did not have this setup. Over the coming months this workforce blend would be changing, with a reduction in the number of PCSOs and an increase in police officers in turn. The total increase would be 264 officers, taking the number of dedicated neighbourhood officers in GM to 740. The total budgeted PCSO reduction would be 333 posts, however, with over 100 vacancies currently available, this meant that the actual reduction would be 215, which equated to one PCSO per ward. It was emphasised that no PCSOs would be made redundant, there would be a pragmatic and structured approach, with some applying for alternative roles internally, with a number applying to be police officers, who if successful, would become an officer within their current community area.

Every district also had a prevention hub in place now, as well as dedicated neighbourhood crime teams which would focus on specific issues highlighted within each community. The GMP website now had the functionality for the public to enter their postcode and find

pictures of their neighbourhood teams, with details of direct contacts. Reference was also made to the launch of 'Bee in the Loop' this would allow direct contact with, and feedback from, the community neighbourhood teams, to ensure an informed and up-to-date local populace.

Comments and Questions

Members congratulated GMP officers on delivering the commitments made around neighbourhood policing, welcoming the 'common sense' approach being adopted.

Reference was made to the reduction of PCSO's through natural attrition. Was there a plan in place if this attrition did not take place at the speed that GMP leadership expected? DCC Woods commented that this was a fair challenge, referencing a similar process at South Yorkshire Police where within 12-18 months the reduction had taken place as planned. GMP was such a big organisation with a wide variety of roles that this should not be a significant issue. There would be a 'cut off' point established, but there was no particular concern at present that this would need to be enacted.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes the background findings from the Neighbourhood Policing Review and consultation.
2. That the Panel notes the elements of the new Neighbourhood Policing Model.

PFCP/20/23 POLICE FUND BUDGET REPORT

Rachel Rosewell (Deputy Treasurer, GMCA) introduced a report informing the Panel of the Greater Manchester Police Fund Revenue and Capital Budget for 2023/24, revised three-year medium term financial plan 2023/24 to 2025/26 and the projected position on general and earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel notes the report.