

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL
MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2024 IN THE BOARDROOM, GMCA
OFFICES

PRESENT:

Councillor Janet Emsley	Rochdale Council (Chair)
Councillor Amy Cowen	Bolton Council
Councillor Richard Gold	Bury Council
Councillor Josh Charters	Oldham Council
Councillor David Lancaster	Salford Council
Councillor Vimal Choksi	Tameside Council
Councillor Simon Thomas	Trafford Council
Councillor Dane Anderton	Wigan Council
Angela Lawrence	Independent Member

Also in attendance:

Kate Green	GM Deputy Mayor
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Officers Present:

Ian Cosh	Chief Finance Officer, GMP
Lee Rawlinson	Chief Resources Officer, GMP
DCC Terry Woods	GMP
ACC Chris Sykes	GMP
DCFO Ben Norman	GMFRS
Samantha Stabler	Interim Advisor to Panel & Head of Community Safety, Manchester City Council
Neil Evans	Director of Police, Crime, Fire & Criminal Justice, GMCA
Lee Teasdale	Senior Governance & Scrutiny Officer, GMCA
Steve Wilson	Treasurer, GMCA

PFCP/09/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Rabiya Jiva (Bolton), Councillor Chris Goodwin (Oldham), Councillor Rosemary Barratt (Stockport), Councillor Rose Thompson (Trafford), Councillor Tom Morrison (Stockport), Councillor Barbara Bentham (Salford), Councillor

Luthfur Rahman (Manchester), Independent Member Majid Hussain and Chief Executive Portfolio Lead Sandra Stewart.

PFCP/10/24 CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS & URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that the Panel was required by national legislation to hold an additional meeting following the conclusion of the Mayoral Elections to consider the Mayor's proposal for Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime. This meeting was scheduled to be held on 14th May 2024 and would consist of the existing 2023/24 Panel. Members were reminded of the importance of quoracy at this meeting.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Chairs announcement be received.

PFCP/11/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Deputy Mayor Kate Green submitted a declaration in relation to the For Information item 'Deputy Mayor Decision Notice' in her role as a governor at Manchester Metropolitan University.

PFCP/12/24 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 30TH JANUARY 2024

Members considered the minutes of the previous meeting.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

PFCP/13/24 POLICE FUND BUDGET REPORT

The Deputy Mayor, Kate Green, together with Steve Wilson, GMCA Treasurer, introduced a report notifying Panel Members of the Greater Manchester Police Fund revenue and capital budget 2024/25, revised three-year medium term financial plan 2024/25 to 2026/27

and the projected position on general and earmarked reserves. Points highlighted included:

- At the precept meeting of the Panel in January, members had been advised of a £16m shortfall that still remained. The Deputy Mayor stated that she was pleased to now be able to present the balanced budget proposal, expressing her thanks for the work of GMP financial officers and the GMCA Treasurer's team in bringing this together.
- This was achieved through a variety of sources, including funding through the police uplift programme, additional income sources and cost savings/efficiencies.
- The cost saving and efficiency measures included work to drive savings from ICT contracts and reviews of contacts across the board – making use of opportunities to cut costs whilst also driving forward IT efficiency programmes. Savings in fuel and utility costs had also been found, along with continued active management of vacancies in GMP.
- There was disappointment that the government had announced that they would not provide extra funding for the Safer Streets Fund, though funding was to be provided again to the Violence Reduction Unit which had delivered a number of high-level successes in recent years.
- Detail was provided on the intended use of reserve funding in 2024/25. Some of this funding would provide additional funding for complainants in cases of rape and serious sexual assault. It was explained that there were currently long delays in cases of this nature coming to court, which was highly traumatising and sometimes resulted in complainants disengaging from the criminal process.

Comments and Questions

- Members queried if the funding for the Panel was highlighted. It was advised that there was not a separate funding stream for the Panel and that this was covered within the overall fund. There were particular funds that were received by PCC's but not CA's – the GMCA Treasurer would more seek clarity on this to feed back.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted and the budget proposals be approved.

2. That the GMCA Treasurer would feed back directly to Cllr Lancaster on panel funding streams.

PFCP/14/24 OPERATION WILDFLOWER – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Deputy Mayor Kate Green and Chief Superintendent Chris Sykes presented a report on the current financial implications of Operation Wildflower. Points highlighted included:

- Outside of London, Greater Manchester had seen the largest amount of protest activity in the country related to the ongoing distressing situation in the Middle East.
- This was taking a particular toll at present on policing resources and upon police officers. There were concerns about the welfare of officers, who were finding that again and again their weekend leave was being cancelled to police protest activities.
- Greater Manchester was of course to be considered as a place where the public had every right to take part in peaceful protest and this was not disputed. The concern was the lack of additional resources from government provided to mitigate these pressures and make sure that events could take place without incident.
- Despite the increases and the heightened emotions at the current time – thanks was given that these protests continued in the significant majority to be peaceful, respectful and policed with appropriate sensitivity.
- There had inevitably been a rise in hate crimes reported since October 7th. With 228 cases of antisemitic hate crime, and 178 cases of islamophobia hate crime – though it was known that underreporting in these areas was significant. Arrests remained low, with an average of 17 of month. There was a determination however that the tensions and hostilities in the Middle East would not replicate themselves via hostilities within GM's diverse range of communities.

Comments and Questions

- Members referenced the cost figures highlighted within the papers and asked if these were the figures for central Manchester alone or the region as a whole. It was advised that the figures covered the total cost of policing protests for the whole region. It was further advised that a mixture of resources were used, but wherever possible the resources were in addition to business as usual expectations so that

officers where possible were not being taken out of other policing requirements in the area.

- It was asked if operational costs included the extra work that had been required around community policing and extra patrols around areas at most risk of disturbances. It was advised that Operation Wildflower did include these additional elements. A considerable workplan was in place, including a protected services plan; increased patrolling around certain sites; increased intelligence gathering; and increased engagement in the community.
- Members complemented the strong community work that had taken place since October. Regular feedback had been received from residents by councillors in Sedgley Park for example – and this feedback had indicated that whilst residents remained concerned, they had very much welcomed the noticeable extra police presence.
- It was asked if contingencies were built into GMP's general operating budget for protest events. It was advised that given the tight budgetary margins being worked with it was not possible to build these sorts of contingencies into the budget. There was however an 'Operational Contingency Reserve' which was used for issues that could be better anticipated.
- Discussion took place about the importance of investing in communities via forums such as the Community Safety Partnership to provide preventative foundations that result in reducing the pressures placed on police officers.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the Panel note the contents of the report having considered the continued resourcing and financial challenge posed by the ongoing policing operation.

PFCP/15/24 NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING UPDATE

Deputy Chief Constable Terry Woods presented a report updating on the strengthening of neighbourhood policing in Greater Manchester and how this was working in practice with partners. Points highlighted included:

- Moves towards a budgeted number of 482 officers in neighbourhoods continued apace. The current number stood at 406 (15% vacancy factor) which was progression upon the last report.
- The reduction of PCSO's to introduce further warranted officers also continued. From 589 previously, the number was now at 353 – part of a phased reduction to 215.
- Whilst the increase in warranted officers was being funded through PCSO reductions, it was also important not to have a 'guillotine' moment in terms of their numbers, and instead to gradually reduce these numbers in line with the filling of vacancies by trained officers.
- GMP was now at the point of having a full compliment of officers due to the welcome investments in recent years. However, a 'training lag' had purposefully been built into those roles which required fully trained officers – such as child protection/neighbourhood teams/traffic officers. Once GMP was happy that these officers had passed probation they would then be placed into these specialist roles thus adding to the numbers within neighbourhoods.
- Significant investment had been made as part of Phase 2 of the Neighbourhood Review Project in relation to improving and aligning the GMP Neighbourhood Performance Framework to the national framework. GMP had been involved in both regional and national groups to review and build upon best practice.
- Local Prevention Hubs with multi-agency approaches were now in place. These were slightly different in every district to meet contextual needs. Very intensive work on community problems was now taking place, with a positive demand shift being seen.
- The 'Bee in the Loop' engagement emails were now picking up considerably in terms of reach – but it was asked that all engage in further pushing this out to the community.
- In terms of performance, there had over the past 12 months been a 13.8% reduction in neighbourhood crime in GM – this was around 7000 less victims and included a 21.4% decrease in residential burglary.

Comments and Questions

- Members sought assurance around promised reductions in abstractions from neighbourhood policing. It was advised that whilst this varied as an issue depending

on the district, it was becoming an increasing rarity. The abstraction data could be provided to the Panel as it became available.

- There were concerns around neighbourhood officers advising the public that they were being taken out of their wards which in turn reduced public confidence in the neighbourhood policing model. It was advised that there were concerted efforts taking place to ensure that going forward, officers would be used for response demand when it was within their own ward only.
- Concerns were expressed that some PCSO's with tremendous levels of experience in complex wards may be lost in the reductions. This was fully understood, and it was hoped that some PCSO's would transfer into police officer roles, with a keenness that they then return to the ward in which they were based.
- Members felt that PACT meetings had generally began to run their course and a lot of their function had been overtaken by Bee in the Loop – however it was felt that there was still a place direct engagement with the public – were there any thoughts on this? It was advised that the gold structure in place for the neighbourhood implementation review included a significant element around engagement and this was something that could be brought back for discussion by the Panel at a future date.
- The Deputy Mayor welcomed the progress seen in neighbourhood policing since the introduction of the model one year ago, hoping that there would be opportunity for a fuller report on the embedding of neighbourhood policing to be brought back to the Panel towards the end of the current calendar year – including examples of initiatives that had been identified during the adaption of the model.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the report has been considered and the contents noted.
2. That the feedback on the model and discussion of how to create consistency across Greater Manchester be noted.
3. That neighbourhood policing abstraction data be forwarded to members when it becomes available.
4. That an item be added to the work plan on public engagement at the neighbourhood level.
5. That a further update on the embedding on the Neighbourhood Policing Model be brought to a future meeting of the Panel.

Deputy Mayor Kate Green & DCFO Ben Norman presented a report that provided a summary of the HMICFRS Round 3 inspection of Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service as part of their independent assessment of the effectiveness & efficiency, and their thematic inspection on The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services. Points highlighted included:

- The efficiency & effectiveness report was published earlier in March and presented a very good news story – with the results not only showing that GMFRS was the most improved fire and rescue service in the country, but also that it was now the best performing service in the country overall.
- GMFRS had received a ‘good’ rating in ten of the eleven areas considered. An ‘adequate’ rating had been received in terms of keeping paper records, however these had now been upgraded to digital. The next plan for the team was to move up to ‘outstanding’ ratings.
- The Deputy Mayor paid tribute to CFO Russel, DCFO Norman and all their colleagues in achieving this result.
- In terms of the thematic inspection, a sample was taken across 10 different fire authorities. There would not be a specific result for GMFRS, but rather an impression from across all ten services that would lead to a collated report from the inspectorate expected later in the year.
- Some informal feedback had however been received from the inspection team. Broadly it was confirmed that important advances had been made in this area, in terms of being able to deal swiftly and appropriately with misconduct cases. This formed part of a bigger picture in which lead officers had been reshaping the whole culture of GMFRS.

Comments and Questions

- Reference was made to fire safety audits at commercial properties and the instructional value of companies holding them. It was advised that a report could be brought to the Panel in future on fire assessments. There had been a shift in recent

times following legislation changes more akin to the Health & Safety Executive and acting as an enforcing authority. Enforcement had taken place over 100 times over the past two years, but the primary concern of GMFRS was to ensure that education was shared, and engagement had taken place at a higher level than ever over the past 12 months. The recent precept funding had meant that the service would be able to invest and build upon the existing headcount of inspecting officers. This was vital, as at the present time there was not the right headcount of inspecting officers with the appropriate experience available to inspect as many premises as needed in what was a rapidly expanding build environment in the city region.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That an update of fire assessments of business premises be brought to the Panel at an appropriate future of the PFC Steering Group.

PFCP 17/24 ANNUAL FEEDBACK FROM LGA FIRE COMMISSION MEMBERS

Vice-Chair Councillor Dane Anderton provided a verbal update to the Panel on the key issues discussed at the LGA Fire Commission over the past year. Points highlighted included:

- One of the key themes over the past year had been energy transition, and the increasing usage of e-bikes, e-vapes and other electronic storage battery powered items, and in turn the risks inherent in this.
- An example was cited of the 5 million disposable vapes that were now in landfills. These all had lithium batteries and presented a risk to large waste disposal facilities. Equally there was concern about imported third party charging batteries that did not meet trading standards requirements being used to charge transport such as e-bikes/e-scooters in high-risk apartment buildings, and electronic cars being stored in enclosed car park spaces.
- The importance of partnership working, and the ability of fire services to provide support in areas such as right care, right person and trading standards was highlighted.

Comments and Questions

- Members expressed further concerns about the dangers of electronic batteries. It was considered vital that the public was well aware of the risks and dangers inherent in imported cheap third-party chargers and that there needed to be a clear programme of work to identify the gaps that currently existed. Members asked that a further presentation due on this be brought forward to a earlier meeting of the PFC Steering Group.
- The Deputy Mayor also highlighted that the Mayor had made a pledge around the Good Landlords Charter – seeking to drive up standards in the social and private rented sectors. He was keen to take this thinking further, particularly in relation to strengthening the rights of tenants to be able to demand action from landlords where there were concerns about safety – concerns around these further fire risks would be conveyed back to the Mayor.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the update be received.

PFCP 18/24 GM POLICE, FIRE & CRIME PANEL INDEPENDENT MEMBERS APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Samantha Stabler, Interim GM Community Safety Lead, presented a report setting out the proposed process for recruitment ahead of the conclusion of the current independent member terms, which would conclude on 31st October 2024.

RESOLVED/-

1. That the commencement of the process of recruitment for two new independent members to the Police, Fire & Crime Panel be agreed.
2. That the process and timetable for the recruitment of new independent co-opted members as proposed in section 2 of the report be agreed.

3. That delegation be given to the Chair of the Panel and Lead Chief Executive (or their nominated representative) to conduct the interviews and to bring recommendations to the Panel on 18th September 2024 for confirmation.
4. That the grateful thanks of the Panel be extended to Majid Hussain and Angela Lawrence MBE for the important contributions that they have made to taking forward the work of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in their capacity as independent co-opted members over the past six years.