

## **STAFFORDSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL – 28 January 2019**

### **NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL 12 NOVEMBER 2018**

#### **Report of the Secretary**

Your Chairman, Mr Walker (Independent Member) and your support officer attended the National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels at Warwick University on 12 November 2018. This was the 7th National Conference organised by Frontline Consulting. Representatives of most Panels in England and Wales attend this event as it is recognised as a valuable opportunity to update on the national picture for Panels.

#### **Presentations/Discussions**

Guest Speakers at the Opening session were Sara Thornton (Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council) and Mark Burn-Williamson OBE (Chair of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners).

Sara Thornton reported on the increase in crime levels nationally with more being hidden and complex in nature, moving between physical and on-line environments. Coupled with reduced funding and officer numbers this had led to reduced outcomes ie arrests and charges. She continued by referring to the need to 'skill up' frontline officers whose role was increasingly becoming responsive rather than preventative. She also referred to a recent Home Affairs Committee report calling on the Home Office to play a greater role in bringing Forces together whilst acknowledging the locality aspect of the service.

Concluding, Sara Thornton referred to her Council's current work with the Association of PCCs to support the Home Office in compiling submissions to the Treasury for the forthcoming Spending Review.

Mark Burn-Williamson also referred to work in preparation for the Spending Review, highlighting the additional budget pressures created by the recent requirement to increase contributions to the Police Pension Fund. He called on Panels to support their Commissioner in lobbying for an increase in budgets.

#### **National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels**

In April 2018 this Panel agreed to take up membership of the newly formed National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels. The Association has been formed to provide a means of information sharing, networking and joint working with other Panels and to give a united voice when dealing with organisations such as the National Association of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The Association held its first AGM at the Frontline Conference. Most of its agenda focussed on organisational and Constitutional matters. The main discussion centred on information received from the Home Office that the use of their grant monies to fund the subscription fee for the Association was not permitted. Panel Chairmen have been asked to lobby the Minister for Policing to change this view and accordingly your Chairman has made representations to the Minister.

## **Workshops**

The afternoon session was devoted to workshops with each of your representatives attending different events. Their reports are below:

*The role of PCP Member Champions (feedback from your Support Officer)-* Some time ago this Panel approved and began implementation of a Member Champion system with 2 members assigned to one of each of the (then) four themes in the Commissioner's Strategy. Unfortunately at that time the system didn't gather momentum therefore I attending this Workshop to learn from others' experiences.

The Workshop was facilitated by the Support Officer to the North Wales PCP. Their organisation and system for Champions mirrors that adopted by Staffordshire therefore there is no easily identifiable change that can be made to the Staffordshire scheme to make it effective. Your Chairman and I have been looking at ways managing the Panels increased workload. Should it prove beneficial in the future, the Champions system may be proposed as a means of dealing with the workload.

*Police Finance and Risks (feedback from your Chairman and Support Officer)* – Representatives of Grant Thornton presented an analysis of funding across Forces which showed an increasing reliance on the Precept, however additional local funding did not fully compensate for the reduced Central Government Grants.

The presentation went on to detail the level of Reserves held by each Force with reference made to the Governments directive that the minimum level should be around 3% of Gross Revenue Expenditure in order give confidence that a Force could deal with spikes in demand for services. Overall the policing sector had seen a reduction in Reserves which was a favourable position if the funding was used for transformation projects but unsustainable if the funds were being used for operational policing purposes.

On Capital Grant Funding, Grant Thornton reported on a lack of investment in Capital items which resulted in Forces having to sell Capital assets to fund others. This was not sustainable in the long term.

*The future of Neighbourhood Policing (Feedback from your Chairman)* -The session began with a short presentation of the findings from the Police foundations recent research project.

The frustration of police officers who believe in the benefits of neighbourhood policing but who find that they are spending most of their time on response calls came through very strongly. Everybody agrees with the principle but having the manpower to do it is another matter

A couple of quotes:

*“Most beat managing PCs are now spending between 60 and 90 percent of their duties doing response work”*

And

*“We are being used as walking response officers”*

After the presentation there was a general debate and one member said that Neighbourhood policing worked very well in his neighbourhood. He didn't have a particularly strong accent but the person leading the debate asked if he was from Durham so it must be common knowledge that the system can work and indeed does in Durham

*Key Findings from the National Police ICT User Survey (Feedback from Mr Walker)* – This session was hosted by Bernard Rix CEO of CoPaCC and publisher of the report. The survey was conducted with the support of the Police Federation and Superintendents Association and respondents from all forces took part.

Evidence submitted showed that the Staffordshire Force were not the leaders in introducing the use of personal tablets, body cams and in making massive investment in their technology infrastructure. The 'on the ground' survey appears to show that within the Staffordshire Force:

- There is less satisfaction with their ICT provision than the national average
- There is a feeling that the Force compares poorly with others on ICT investment
- There are doubts as to whether the Force is investing wisely in high technology products

More positively, Staffordshire's respondents appear to be more satisfied than the national average with their ICT helpdesk provision, for example.

*Rethinking Police Demand (Feedback from Mr Walker)*- Crest Advisory, an independent consultancy specialising in criminal justice and policing presented their report on police demand which identifies that major shifts in externally driven demand have left the police facing unprecedented pressures. They also stated, however, that the police lack a good understanding of the nature and shape of that demand to help them plan and deploy to best effect.

They used evidence from a variety of sources and identified that the following key trends and changes are pushing up demand on the police – even at a time when the overall volume of crime is falling:

1. Since 2013 a significant increase in the volume of recorded crime (up by 40% from 2013 to 2017), particularly from violence and sexual offences, which together represent the largest category of reported offences.
2. Reduced budgets have resulted in overall police workforce numbers falling by 25% since 2010. The ratio of crime cases to number of officers and staff initially remained constant between 2011 – 2013 but has since grown substantially by 43%, reflecting the growth in more serious crime since 2013 and quantifying the scale of pressure felt by the police.
3. Around a fifth (18%) of the incident volume tackled through command and control centres concerns what is termed 'vulnerability demand' - cases that involve mental health, drugs, alcohol, domestic incidents or vulnerable persons. While this is lower than some estimates, the report suggests vulnerability demand uses up a disproportionately high quantity of police deployment resources.
4. The number and complexity of cases involving people who are vulnerable in some way, are growing, with a rise in Section 136 mental health detentions, missing children, domestic assaults/abuse and drugs interventions, all of which require effective cross-agency arrangements or services, these type of cases frequently have significant time demands on the officers dealing with them.
5. The volume of anti-social behaviour (which has historically made up the bulk of 'non-crime demand') has been falling over the past decade!! - down by 56% since 2011 and likely to continue. However, the benefit from this reduction is not enough to offset the pressure from rising crime.

NB: The facilitator was challenged by many people in this seminar over the validity of the data concerning anti-social behaviour. There was a widely held view that anti-social behaviour had not decreased but it was more likely that people were fed up with trying to report it via the 101 number and give up. The facilitator admitted that it was 'recorded' incidents that had decreased!

The bottom line is that shifts in demand, alongside the shrinking of budgets, risk creating a crisis of legitimacy for policing. With more 'demand' than the police are capable of responding to, it is inevitable that the police will need to make tough choices about how to allocate scarce resources. Inevitably, some of these choices will be controversial and unpopular.

S Sweeney, K Walker, J Plant.