

Edward Leigh
Chair
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel
c/o Jane Webb
Peterborough City Council

20th April 2020

Dear Edward

I hope you all found our telecon last week useful and informative. I thought it would be useful to provide my responses to the questions we discussed in order that these can be circulated to Panel members. This response can be found at Appendix 1.

I am pleased that it was recognised in the current unprecedented times of national crisis, I have to take a proportionate governance approach, one which focusses on how policing is supporting the needs of those in the county during the current crisis. As you appreciated, I will therefore not be placing disproportionate demands for information on Cambridgeshire Constabulary which could distract them from their policing response to the crisis. This includes the number of reports that they submit to my Business Co-ordination Board. However, at the same time I need to balance this against the need for transparency, the need to respond to public concerns, and provide reassurance.

We discussed the arrangements for the Panel to continue to carry out their statutory duty to support and scrutinise me. Due to technological solutions not yet being suitably available, we agreed on a proportionate and transparent approach in which the Panel could still carry out their statutory function. As such, the Panel will continue to be sent the link to reports that are submitted to my Business Co-ordination Board. As Chair you kindly offered to seek questions from your fellow Panel members on these reports which you would then 'filter' to ensure that they are reasonable and proportionate in respect of their duty. Timescale wise, we envisaged any questions and responses to be after the Board meeting, and that the written response I provide will be published on the Panel's website.

I appreciate the Panel will inevitably be interested in the policing response to the current crisis. However, I wish to reiterate that the Panel are mindful that any such operational matter that they may seek to scrutinise me on which is relevant to their challenge and support of my role, would also place an unnecessary burden on the Constabulary in responding to. Nonetheless, I do look forward to this new working arrangement. I hope the responses provided will enable the Panel to both gain reassurance as how I am holding the Chief Constable to account at this unprecedented time and how the Panel can support and scrutinise the work of myself and my office.

Yours sincerely,



Acting Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Enc - Appendix 1 - Responses to questions discussed on Panel telecon on 15th April 2020

Acting Police and Crime Commissioner's response to questions raised on telecon on 15th April 2020

Participants:

Police and Crime Panel: Edward Leigh, Cllr Sharp, Fiona McMillan, Jane Webb.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner: Ray Bisby, Dorothy Gregson, Jim Haylett, Aly Flowers

The Acting Commissioner opened up the telecon by setting the context in respect of the current Covid-19 public health crisis.

- The Covid-19 situation means that business cannot be as usual. In order to respond to the emergency and fulfil statutory responsibilities, as Acting Commissioner, he has to take a focused and proportionate governance approach focussing on how policing is supporting the needs of those in the county during the current crisis yet continuing to be efficient and effective. As such, the Acting Commissioner will be holding to account the Chief Constable as to how Cambridgeshire Constabulary (the "Constabulary") are responding to the demands placed on them by Covid-19 and what they are less able to deal with from the resource available. The aim is to ensure transparency, respond to public concerns and provide reassurance.
- The Acting Commissioner is in regular contact with Chief Constable and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) receive information from daily operational calls and countywide partnership calls. The Acting Commissioner along with other Police and Crime Commissioners has weekly conference calls, arranged by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, with appropriate government Ministers.
- The OPCC has moulded and flexed itself with its input and actions at the right pace and right time within the framework of the Police and Crime Plan to include:
 - Redeployment of resource to the Constabulary, specifically to their Critical Incident Hub, Victims and Witness Hub, and the Special Constabulary.
 - The Communications Manager engaged and inputting heavily with countywide and partnership work i.e. the 'warning and informing' cell of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
 - Head of Policy engaged regionally with Probation Service regarding plan for any early release of offenders and others on offender work.
 - Victims Lead supported victim service providers to redesign their services to comply with social distancing guidance.
 - Criminal justice (CJ) system – extra-ordinary CJ meeting called when recognised emerging issues with the system.
 - Chief Executive with deputy Director of Public Health leading a group which is mapping out the response to groups which can potentially experience exclusion and stimulating action through LRF structures if there are gaps in the response.

1.1 Question: Are all Constabulary and OPCC communication channels being used to best effect to inform and reassure people?

Response: Both the Constabulary and the OPCC are working with partners at a county level to develop and support clear, consistent, and focussed communications, signposting to support services, such as mental health. The work supports the Warning and Informing Group linked to the county's LRF rather than working separately to this. In this way, campaigns can be co-ordinated. The OPCC has not sought to promote 'its voice' at this time but in line with the purpose of a LRF, has worked as part of the multi-agency environment to ensure efficient, effective and consistent communications across the county on issues the LRF have prioritised.

Action from telecon: OPCC to send copy of LRF information (Structure Chart) to Panel Secretariat for circulation to Panel members.

1.2 Question: Providing clear, unambiguous guidance on how the police are interpreting and enforcing COVID-19 laws in relation to leaving the home for work, exercise, shopping, assisting other people who are housebound, etc.

Response: With any legislative change it takes time to introduce and provide the necessary structures and processes to make it happen, however, on this occasion there was no time. The information and guidance has been coming in at pace and the Constabulary has made it available in a format which is consistent and easily available, but this often changes on a daily basis.

The Acting Commissioner fully supports the Chief Constable's position regarding the approach to the use of police powers, that being: 'Engage', 'Explain' and 'Encourage' people to comply prior to any 'Enforcement' action.

Both the Chief Constable and the Acting Commissioner have been, and continue to be, impressed how the Constabulary's officers and PCSOs have actively engaged and interacted with local communities.

1.3 Question: Signposting mental health advice and support services

Response: A co-ordinated campaign is to be launched soon and we will share with the Panel when launched

1.4 Question: Advertising community support co-ordinator contact details

Response: The OPCC are inputting and supporting countywide communications to support vulnerable people.

1.5 Question: Explaining how appropriate adults should attend custody interviews

Response: For context, the lead commissioner, and organisation with statutory responsibility for the delivery of the Appropriate Adult (AA) service is the top tier local authority. In Cambridgeshire this is Cambridgeshire County Council /Peterborough City Council. Locally the AA service is delivered by the YMCA, who have likely to have taken advice from their national association.

The Constabulary see it as a priority to ensure the welfare of everyone in police custody – detainees, visitors and staff, and have been working to balance managing risk, whilst ensuring there is no adverse impact on detainees accessing rights and entitlements.

Following representations from the legal community, and with a commitment to reduce face to face contact wherever it is feasibly possible, remote dial in support from solicitors, interpreters and AAs across custody suites. This can be done in a custody setting using existing technology, in accordance with Police and Crime Evidence Act, subject to the agreement of the custody officer, detainee and legal advisor/AA and is considered on a case by case basis.

2. Question: What other measures are relevant agencies, including the Constabulary, taking to reduce load on 101 (and 111) to ensure personal support is available to those who need it?

Response: The OPCC are inputting and supporting countywide communications to support vulnerable people. The Constabulary have updated their website to make webchat and accessing online COVID-19 related information easy.

3. Police resourcing

3.1 Question: Are resources being reallocated effectively?

Response: Yes in terms of officers and staff resource. The resourcing position is monitored daily by the Chief Constable and the Constabulary's operational command groups. This includes the demand on critical functions alongside resourcing of those functions.

3.2 Question: Is budgeted expenditure being exceeded? If so, will this be funded from reserves, borrowing or additional government funding?

Response: The Constabulary's Director of Finance and Resources and his team are closely monitoring this. Although currently too early to give any real indication, it is possible that there may be some attrition on the revenue position. Future finance reports to the Acting Commissioner's Business Co-ordination Board (BCB) and the outturn report would incorporate any additional costs that may be incurred as a result of dealing with the Covid-19 crisis.

3.3 Question: What proportion of officers and staff have been off (ill or self-isolating) at any one time?

Response: The Acting Commissioner receives regular updates on illness and how this affecting services. The Constabulary's operational command structures are kept updated and the situation constantly monitored by the Constabulary's Resource Management Unit. The Unit ensure that there are sufficient resources provided for sections and shift, and record all types are absence. Work is underway to ensure those self-isolating, but not ill, are able to effectively work from home (this applies to officers and staff)

4. Police welfare

4.1 Question - Do police have access to adequate personal protection equipment?

Response: Yes. The Constabulary receives regular deliveries of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), with the position of stock monitored by their operational command groups. The Chief

Constable's position is clear: he wants to make sure that all officers and staff have access to the PPE they need to do their job and to be kept safe.

4.2 Question - Are the police being adequately briefed about how to protect themselves?

Response: Yes. Regular briefing and guidance material are being given and the representative bodies for both Officers and Staff are aware. The position in Cambridgeshire is remaining the same in that all Officers and Staff should adhere to the social distancing advice, including the 2m space between people. Where that gap is not possible to achieve then Officers are to consider wearing a face mask and / or gloves. This will be a decision for the Officer / Staff member to make at the time based on the prevailing circumstances. This allows a level of mature assessment by those there at the time, rather than mandating a rigid framework that would not be appropriate for all scenarios if those present think that is the right and proper thing to do.

4.3 Are officers having to do additional overtime, and is this safe (given tiredness weakens the immune system and increases unconscious risk-taking)?

Response: The Chief Constable and the Acting Commissioner are clear that the health and wellbeing of officers and staff is vital but the Constabulary is still responsible for keeping people safe and conducting 'policing'. Officer and staffing capacity are continually reviewed. The Constabulary has in place access to a number of welfare support mechanisms both locally and nationally.

5. Crime

5.1 Question: How are police managing the reported increase in domestic violence/abuse cases?

Response: The figures being cited nationally are not always reflected at a local level. The Constabulary are dealing with reports of domestic violence and abuse cases as part of normal operational 'business as usual'. The Constabulary and partners are publicising information to offer/signpost support to victims and perpetrators. The Constabulary's Victims and Witness Hub still operating and offering support. The Acting Commissioner has asked for an update to the April BCB which will cover the steps that are being taken to safeguard the vulnerable, in particular those who may be at risk of domestic abuse given the restrictions on movement during the current crisis.

5.2 Question: Are police managing to keep up with changes in patterns of drug dealing?

Response: Through safeguarding monitoring, the impact on Child Criminal Exploitation and appropriate links are being made with Local Authorities if there are any issues.

5.3 Question: Is prescription-free access to methadone helping?

Response: The OPCC has sought feedback from Public Health England (PHE) in response to this question as this is not within the remit of the OPCC or the Constabulary. PHE's feedback in response to national press article, is that this was compiled in response to 'worst case scenario' and is not a reflection of current local or national prescribing practices for substitute medication, which is still specialist clinician led as per clinical guidance.

PHE further advised that changes have occurred in treatment service provision across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no longer 'supervised consumption' arrangements in place and the majority of patients are under reduced frequency medication 'pick up' arrangements to reduce contact, protecting both service users and community pharmacy staff. This is being carefully risk managed by clinicians in specialist treatment services.

6. Acting Commissioner position

6.1 Question - Can we have a statement published about the delayed election; powers that an Acting commissioner does and does not have, and what implications this has for policy; and the role of the Police & Crime Panel in continuing to scrutinise the Acting Commissioner.

Action from the telecon: Agreed that the OPCC would put statement (as opposed to doing a press release) on their website regarding Acting Commissioner position and election.

7. Continued scrutiny by the Police and Crime Panel

7.1 Question: If meeting online, can we have more frequent, but shorter meetings? Can we schedule, at a minimum, two meetings, one in late April/early May to cover urgent and ongoing matters, and one in late May/early June to replace cancelled March meeting?

Agreed action from telecon: To enable continued process of scrutiny of the Acting Commissioner in a proportionate manner, April BCB reports will be circulated to Panel members along with a covering letter to the Chair formally giving the Panel the opportunity to support and scrutinise the Acting Commissioner based on these reports. Any questions Panel members may have on these reports would then be filtered through the Panel's Chair and then discussed with the OPCC ahead of providing a formal written response.

8. Situation with Southern Policing Hub

8.1 Question: Any issues with continued use of Parkside if further delayed?

Response: The continual use of Parkside is being monitored by the Constabulary's Estates Team and the Chief Officer Team.

8.2 Question: Status of current agreement with landowner (e.g. expiry date, penalty clauses)?

Response: The Option to Purchase land at Milton is for three years from March 2019 and is subject to satisfactory planning consent. There is the ability to terminate the agreement at any time without penalty but would not be able to reclaim the Option Fee which was paid on completion.

Overall work on the project is still continuing both in terms of the proposals for the Southern Hub and also looking at the options regarding what would remain in Cambridge city centre. A key milestone had been reached in respect of the external public consultation on the Hub has now closed. The findings of the responses to the consultation would be presented to the Constabulary's Chief Officer Team for consideration. However, in its response to the

consultation, the Constabulary's Chief Officer Team would need to be mindful of any financial and operational impacts that Covid-19 may have on the timescale of the proposed project.

9. Question - What is the plan regarding fire governance?

Response: The Fire Authority appeal against the Judicial Review judgment last summer which had found in favour of the Home Office has been refused; a decision that the Acting Commissioner welcomes. Given the Fire Authority have other outstanding legal action against the Home Office on this matter it is not appropriate for the Commissioner to comment at this time.

OPCC

20th April 2020



