

Cross Party Group on Policing,

Virtual Teams Meeting, Tuesday 22nd June 2021 at 12:30

1. Present

Senedd Cymru – Welsh Parliament

Huw Irranca Davies – Chair, Member of the Senedd (MS) (Labour, Ogmore)
Peredur Owen Griffiths – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
James Evans – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
Natasha Asghar – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Conservative)
Mark Isherwood – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Conservative)
Jack Harries – Support officer for Vikki Howells, Member of the Senedd
Ryland Doyle – Support officer for Mike Hedges, Member of the Senedd
Dr Lee Gonzalez – Support officer for Joel James, Member of the Senedd
Ioan Bellin – Support officer for Rhys ab Owen, Member of the Senedd
Gareth Williams – Support officer for Alun Davies Member of the Senedd
Andrew Bettridge - Senior Communications Officer, Office of John Griffiths AM

Police and Crime Commissioners and Staff

Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and Chair of Policing in Wales
Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent
Cerith Thomas – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Wales Advisor

Chief Constables and Staff

Pam Kelly – Chief Constable, Gwent Police, and Chair of the Welsh Chief Officer Group
Paul Morris – Head of Police Liaison Unit
Lynda Young – Police Liaison Unit, Group Secretary

Invited attendees

Gary Haggaty – Deputy Director – Community Safety Division, Welsh Government

2. Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting explaining that he was currently standing in for John Griffiths who was unable to chair the meeting on this occasion.

The Chair stated, as this was the inaugural meeting of the Cross Party Group on Policing in Wales in the sixth Senedd term, various formal matters were required namely, electing a Chair, Vice Chair and a Secretary. However, he noted that the election of a Vice Chair was not compulsory,

Election of Chair

Nominations for John Griffiths MS to be Chair of the Cross Party Group on Policing were received from the following Members of the Senedd:

- Peredur Owen Griffiths – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
- James Evans – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
- Natasha Asghar – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Conservative)

No further nominations were received.

John Griffiths MS - (Labour) was elected to be Chair of the Cross Party Group on Policing

Election of Vice Chair

Nominations for Vice Chair of the Cross Party Group on Policing

James Evans – (MS) (Plaid Cymru) nominated Huw Irranca Davies – (MS) (Labour) with Natasha Asghar – (MS) (Conservative) and Peredur Owen Griffiths – (MS) (Plaid Cymru) both backing the nomination.

Huw Irranca Davies thanked Members of the Senedd for the nomination however he highlighted the importance in having a Vice Chair from a different political party and that a lack of experience in the Senedd should not deter any Member from being the Chair of a Cross Party Group.

The appointment of Vice Chair was deferred to the next meeting.

Election of Secretariat

Nominations for Lynda Young to be the Secretary of the Cross Party Group on Policing were received from:

- James Evans – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Plaid Cymru)
- Natasha Asghar – Member of the Senedd (MS) (Conservative)

No further nominations were received.

Lynda Young was elected as the Secretary of the Cross Party Group on Policing.

The Chair congratulated the newly elected and re-elected Members of the Senedd and Police and Crime Commissioners on their success at the elections in May. He gave an overview of the Cross Party Group on Policing stating it was a very interesting group because of the way Policing works within Wales, Community Safety and the initiatives forces were involved in such as Adverse Childhood Experiences, domestic violence and abuse as well as support services for vulnerable people so there was a real interplay within not only the reserved issues but what was done in Wales. Furthermore he highlighted the experience of devolution and how things were done differently in Wales.

The Chair introduced Alun Michael, the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and Pam Kelly the Chief Constable for Gwent Police. He explained that the meeting was to give Senedd Members the opportunity to discuss Policing in Wales and the relationship with devolved services and to receive an overview of the landscape of Policing in Wales.

3. Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales

Alun Michael congratulated the newly elected and re-elected Members of the Senedd introducing Jeff Cuthbert Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, Pam Kelly Chief Constable for Gwent and Paul Morris the Head of the Police Liaison Unit.

A joint Presentation would be made by Pam Kelly as the current Chair of the Welsh Chief Officers Group and himself as the current Chair of the Policing in Wales Group.

AM explained that things were done differently in Wales, and that hadn't gone unnoticed with positive comments from Ministers, the Secretary of State for Wales, the Minister for Justice and the Lord Chancellor with comments such as "You seem to be better at doing things together in Wales."

Andrew Dunbobbin has been elected as the new Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales, and together with the three re-elected Commissioners, welcomed future engagement with Senedd Members.

The role of Policing in Wales and the Police Reform Act 2011 meant the UK Government created two corporation soles for each force. One being the Police and Crime Commissioner, who has the responsibility for overall policy, budget, the appointment and dismissal of the Chief Constable and the other being the Chief Constable. The role of Chief Constable is protected in law as an independent role with the responsibility for leading the force, operational delivery of policing services and responsibility for fulfilling all statutory and legal obligations of the office of Chief Constables and complying with any Schemes of Governance that determine force governance arrangements.

The 8 Corporation Soles (4 Police and Crime Commissioners and 4 Chief Constables) have been working confidently together for the last 8 years. During that time they have created the Policing Partnership Board for Wales to engage and work with Welsh Government. The First Minister had accepted an invitation from Policing in Wales to Chair the Board. That had proved to be a very useful and positive platform with an opportunity to include other partners for example, the Welsh Local Government Association whose work is very important within Community Safety and others such as the Ministry of Justice, the Home Office and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Each Police and Crime Commissioner has a responsibility to produce a Police and Crime Plan which sets the strategic direction for the force. AM stressed that forces had to cover many other issues and the Police and Crime Plans should recognise the importance of the strategic policing requirement which was set by the Home

Secretary. He also noted the Programme for Government recently published by Welsh Government.

The 8 Corporation Soles have developed a way of working together on community safety to enable our communities to be safer and feel confident. A policy decision made originally by Carl Sergeant and more recently as a result of work between the Police forces and Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), had resulted in the creation of a Safer Communities Board. They were now seeking to establish a Safer Communities Network where all partners including the 22 Local Authorities and 4 Police forces in Wales could learn and develop together. The Safer Communities' Partnership activities complemented the work of the Policing Partnership Board for Wales and Criminal Justice in Wales.

Criminal Justice in Wales was made up of all the agencies that carried out the work of criminal justice such as the Police, Crown Prosecution Service the Courts and Probation Services in Wales, none of which were devolved however they operated in a devolved environment.

AM Highlighted that Criminal Justice in Wales had created an environment in which it acknowledged things were different in Wales and strived to do things better together. As an example the court service, in conjunction with commissioners, created locations where remote evidence could be given, particularly by vulnerable witnesses, so they didn't have to attend court, which could be a busy and intimidating environment. Welsh Government had, during the last year, provided funding to increase the number of places where witnesses could give remote evidence linked with the work with victims of violence and domestic abuse.

The Commission on Justice in Wales considered whether Criminal Justice in Wales and Policing in Wales should be devolved. At the beginning of the work Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd said "Let us not start by talking about devolution, let's start by saying what it means to create an effective and efficient Criminal Justice system for Wales." Stressing that without getting involved in the argument, the aim is to make the system as it operates in Wales whether devolved or non-devolved the most effective to the public we serve.

4. Pam Kelly – Chief Constable for Gwent Police

Pam Kelly introduced herself stating she was representing the four Welsh Chief Constables as chair of the Welsh Chief Officers Group. PK congratulated the newly elected and re-elected Members of the Senedd. PK stated that Chief Officers enjoyed a good working relationship with Members of the Senedd across Wales and emphasised the importance of working together in order to keep communities safe. Highlighting the Covid crisis as an example whereby there was a consistent approach with communication and dialogue across Wales and not undermining each other's messages in keeping the community safe.

PK highlighted some of the other successes including, working together throughout the covid crisis, responding in partnership with Local Authorities, working closely with Health Professionals, Policing, Fire and Ambulance Services in the response to

covid and recovery. Joint enforcement, responding to the dangers in society, trying to ensure public confidence whilst maintaining legitimacy as well as not being overzealous, but proportionate in ensuring communities were kept safe was important. Those relationships that had developed would continue in Wales.

At community safety and partnership level, the Public Service Boards were preventing and responding to local issues, as Members of the Senedd they would be aware of local issues and would no doubt engage with their local Policing and Local Authorities. The ethos of community safety is “prevention was better than cure” and working together achieved more in terms of that response and prevention work.

Welsh Government currently fund 500 Police Community Support Officers across Wales and have agreed to fund a further 100. This ensures there is a visible policing presence in our communities, engaging with young people including those hard to reach communities, giving crime prevention advice, targeting hotspot crimes areas and gathering intelligence. Being a visible presence in our communities and often working with Local Authority Officers developed cohesive inclusive communities across Wales which was something colleagues in England did not have the benefit of.

Welsh Government also fund the Wales Schools Police Officers Programme. This is a really important scheme helping future generations. The curriculum was about Police Officers going into schools building relationships with young people and communities, taking a very proactive approach by talking about and highlighting preventive work around citizenship, anti-social behaviour, being cyber safe as well as reactive work such as substance misuse or any issues that were happening in the community and building healthy relationships for the future. The Police Community Support Officers and Schools Programmes were pivotal to furthering those relationships within our communities and building for the future across Wales

PK referred to work previously mentioned around safeguarding and children in police custody and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs programme) trying to stop the cycle of offending which could be seen in many of our communities across Wales. Members of the Senedd were asked to be aware what forces are trying to achieve so that in the Senedd and their communities everyone is on the same message, regardless of what party people were a member of.

Joint working on emerging Welsh Government legislation has been ongoing including working closely with Welsh Government around the Abolition of the Defence of Reasonable Punishment known as the Anti-smacking Bill. Being on the prevention front foot in making sure that there was an end to physical punishment of children and that there was proportionate support for parenting, again demonstrated partnership working with other agencies across Wales.

As public health restrictions began to ease, whilst noting the concerns around the increases with the variants, it was important, as a public service that we are all on the same page in terms of what the challenges look and feel like. Policing was already seeing an increase in demand with 999 and 101 calls amplified by 22% in the last 4 months. Policing was seeing the impact of easing restrictions in terms of

calls relating to mental health, violence and suppressed behaviour in some communities and Police are working really closely with partners to mitigate this.

In the Gwent force area alone there had been over 100 protests in the last 10 months, some small but some also very high in numbers. There had been an increase of gatherings with young people, some of which had resulted in anti-social behaviour and violence such as in the Mayhill area of Swansea. Members were asked not to jump to any conclusions further to what they had seen in social media or other media and that they engaged with their local commanders because it was important that everyone worked together with a united voice, supporting our communities together, especially during a time when there was a high demand. As the restrictions ease, that increased demand across all services and it was something all needed to be aware of.

It was expected with the impact of covid on the economy there would be an increase in crime with already deprived areas being hit the hardest. Prevention focused work was already underway looking at how best to Police and manage communities as we come out of the restrictions.

For a year and a half the night time economy has been suppressed. This will change as pubs, clubs, and organised events open again with young people gathering on streets and beaches. The community's perception of this is important as it doesn't mean they are committing crimes and it is important to understand how the police and public services are going to engage with those young people.

Operation Uplift is a UK Government programme over 3 years to increase Police Officers numbers by twenty thousand. That meant across Wales, there would be 200 officers for Gwent and North Wales Police, just under 200 for Dyfed Powys Police and around 400 officers for South Wales Police. Whilst this was great news the concern was that there will be a very young and very inexperienced work force in policing. Police forces were already seeing some pension challenges with experienced members of the workforce leaving the police and forces were working hard to look at what that skills gaps looked like for policing in the future.

Policing is also expected to reduce crime in certain target areas by 20% over the next 2 years and forces were working hard to achieve this, however it was important to realise that was difficult with a young inexperienced work force as forces were trying to upskill very quickly. In Wales forces may have a cap on Police Officer numbers as a result of officers recruited under the uplift programme as some of the skill shortages were in the police staff arena such as cyber, fraud and digital forensics. Forces are working with UK Government to try and have some flexibility around officer numbers, because some resources had to be placed into skills and not just numbers.

5. Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales

Alun Michael stated there was a lot of success to describe, however he highlighted some concerns around messaging from central Government in the sense that the aspiration was very similar but the way it is delivered may not be. AM Welcomed the

Lord Chancellor's emphasis on improving the way victims of rape were dealt with and acknowledged they had been very often let down in the past. In Wales the figures were still not what they should be but they were slightly better than in many other parts of the UK. As previously mentioned within Criminal Justice in Wales work had already started with heads of the Crown Prosecution Service engaging with Senior Police Officers on ways to improve the service.

AM stressed tackling poverty and inequality and the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour was outside the hands of Policing, however policing could work with others in order to try and tackle them. Highlighting an example, through the Policing in Wales Board, it was decided rather than drawing up a race equality plan Welsh Policing would work together jointly across the board with Welsh Government's strategy to deal with race equality, writing to the First Minister with this intention. In parallel to this, Amy Rees who chairs Criminal Justice in Wales also wrote to the First Minister giving a similar approach. This demonstrated the collaboration between Welsh Government and non-devolved bodies, Criminal Justice and Policing in Wales.

Changing the way we live and work was a big challenge but if we don't change we will be condemned to repeat some of the problems that we had often seen. It was a combined ambition with Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners for forces to focus on prevention and early intervention.

Policing in Wales, through Early Action Together had developed the ACEs programme (Adverse Childhood Experiences) to understand the impact of trauma and therefore sought to alleviate the impact. From this it was possible to understand that 4 or more ACEs increased the likelihood of being drawn into substance misuse, drugs and alcohol and the likelihood of becoming a perpetrator of violence but also of becoming a victim of violence and certainly the likelihood of ending up in prison. AM stressed that there was a very good reason for Policing to understand the causes, highlighting it wasn't new in terms of policing as it was Sir Robert Peel who said "the first responsibility of the Police is to prevent crime and success in Policing is demonstrated by the absence of crime not the presence of activity"

The partnership with Public Health Wales had been a very significant one for Policing starting with discussions like what does it mean to take a Public Health approach to crime?

1. It is understanding the cause and what can be done to prevent the cause.
2. Understanding the contamination and the spread.

AM explained that we all understand about contamination and the spread with the recent pandemic. However similarly why if there was an issue in one area, there is an imitation in another? Policing had seen violence and outbreaks within communities and at public events but how has this spread to other areas and communities? We don't yet understand the answer to that.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations act had some really powerful ideas. The opportunities for young people, environment issues and connectivity between

different areas of public policy was significant. Working together with the Public Service Boards and Safer Communities Group gave the opportunity to make these connections and how we create safer confident communities.

Policing occupies a position where officers are called upon to be in the front line, to endanger themselves responding to circumstances that are often unpredictable and often very dangerous. Officers joined not only to respond but to prevent those harms in the future. Investing in preventing harm is quite difficult when Policing is already stretched in responding to the challenges on a day to day basis. However this is what the 8 Corporate Soles were trying to achieve working together across Wales. Prevention will never be as dramatic as the policing responses and activity that has to take place but both are absolutely crucial.

That's why working with Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, Welsh Local Government Association, and also working with other non-devolved bodies with some growing recognition in Whitehall and Ministers in UK Government we can make our communities safe and confident and we look forward to being able to work with Members of the Senedd because we all play a part in the big ambition on doing the best for our public.

6. Questions and discussion

Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair

Huw Irranca-Davies asked a question relating to public confidence within community safety which had been a big drive within Wales for many years. From the establishment of Community Safety Partnerships to the original PACT meetings (Police and Communities Together) within the community, bringing together Local Authorities, Councillors, Police Officers and Police Community Support Officers to tackle the issues effecting the community. He asked what was the sense of how well we are doing or otherwise in community engagement at that grass roots level? Stating his perception was and had been the same for years, that it varied enormously on the ground some were doing exceptionally well while others found it difficult to make it work.

HI also mentioned the aspect of cross border co-operation which was a fundamental part of what policing in Wales was about,. Highlighting this was something Policing might want to flag up with older and newer members of the Senedd to give a full picture of Policing.

Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales

Alun Michael emphasised the impact of social media and whilst it had increased our connectivity as we use it every day in a variety of ways to communicate, there were some real issues within social media one being whipping up a storm and/or gathering people together such as events seen with protests at the steps of the Senedd to raves and events such as those seen in Mayhill. The impact of social media firstly had an impact on the activity that damaged communities and causes

what are actually crimes and secondly it gave a false impression of the connectivity between the police and local communities; for example, there are good relationships between the Police and communities in the Docks, Butetown area however you wouldn't think so if you look at the news or on social media. Whilst some of the things being said in the media were appropriate to challenge there needs to be a balance.

In emphasising local prevention you can't ignore the exploitation that comes through human trafficking and the importance of combatting terrorism, serious and organised crime. AM referred to the Head of National Crime Agency Lynne Owens who, whenever speaking about her work would say "The work the Police Community Support Officers carry out is important for my work too."

Pam Kelly – Chief Constable for Gwent Police

Pam Kelly stated without question across Wales all 4 forces worked very closely together and across England and Wales all 43 forces worked very closely together so the interoperability in order to tackle serious and organised crime, county lines was there. When the issues in Mayhill flared up, Gwent Police sent officers straight away to assist and without the need to ask, this had been reciprocated in the same way with similar issues in Newport. Forces link into the National Crime Agency to gather intelligence across the whole of England and Wales and not just the UK but international intelligence in order to try and mitigate serious organised crime.

Emphasising it was important to get the local community officers to prevent crime but also to gather information in order to try and prevent the national and international crime. For example, serious organised crime was something forces tackled every day and Gwent Police force locked up more criminals for serious organised crime in the last year than the previous 4 years taking drugs and firearms off the streets, out of our communities, protecting the vulnerable and those subject to human trafficking.

The worst thing we can do in Wales is to think it doesn't happen in our neighbourhood. If we are aware and alert we can feed that intelligence and will have a better opportunity to prevent it.

Community safety was better in some areas than others and it was important to put community safety and its structure at the top of the agenda when talking about prevention. Even anti-social behaviour issues that are seen at local level right through to the drugs misuse or gang culture that was emerging, community safety was at the heart of that. As public servants devolved or not, the aim was the same and this is achievable by working together in partnership to tackle this issue.

Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

One of the major differences that effects communities, businesses, and people in general that wasn't around 15 to 20 years ago was the impact of cyber in criminal activity and there wasn't a category for cybercrime according to the Home Office. The figures for aspects of crime that are solely cyber dependent was a relatively low percentage, around about 5%, but when you look at crimes like fraud or indecent

images of children there is a significant element of cyber, around 40% to 50% of all crimes and therefore that's critically important when we talk about neighbourhood Policing. For many people cyber space was now part of their neighbourhood and that meant we have to have officers trained in identifying crime on cyber and taking the right action. Linked to that of course meant investment in education such as the schools programme so people were cyber aware and know what steps to take to prevent themselves from being scammed. Crime changes and this effects our neighbourhoods so we all have to keep pace with it and it's important that we understood that.

7. Closing remarks - Huw Irranca-Davies MS, Chair

The chair thanked everyone for attending stating the presentation was a great overview not just of the landscape of policing and community safety but also the key issues going forward.

HI congratulated John Griffiths for being elected as the Chair and the Police and Crime Commissioners for being re-elected and elected. HI thanked the wider Policing family for all the hard work during the pandemic and carrying out their usual day to day business. He thanked the Members of the Senedd for joining the Cross Party Group on Policing

The meeting concluded at 13:30