

Cross Party Group on Policing,

Virtual Teams Meetings, Tuesday 6th October 2020 at 12:30

1. Present

Senedd Cymru – Welsh Parliament

John Griffiths MS - Chair (Labour, Newport East)
Elin Jones MS - Llywydd (Plaid Cymru) Ceredigion
Mark Isherwood MS - (Conservative) North Wales
Neil Hamilton MS - (United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) Mid and West Wales
Mia Rees, (Support Staff for Suzy Davies MS, Welsh Conservatives, South Wales West)
Mike Bryan - (Support Staff for Angela Burns MS, Welsh Conservatives Carmarthen West & South Pembrokeshire)
Ioan Berrin - (Support Staff for Helen Mary Jones MS, Plaid Cymru, Mid and West Wales)
Thomas Pinder - (Support Staff for David Melding MS, Welsh Conservatives, South Wales Central)
Hannah McCarthy - (Support Staff for Jack Sargeant MS, Welsh Labour, Alyn and Deeside)
Ash Lister - (Support staff for Hannah Blythyn MS, Welsh Labour, Delyn)
Andrew Bettridge - Senior Communications Officer, Office of John Griffiths MS

Police and Crime Commissioners and Staff

Alun Michael – Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales and Chair of Policing in Wales
Dafydd Llywelyn – Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys
Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent
Arfon Jones – Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales
Cerith Thomas – Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Wales Advisor
Carys Morgans - Chief Executive for Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys
Sian Curley - Chief Executive for Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

Chief Constables and Staff

Carl Foulkes – Chief Constable, North Wales Police and Chair of the Welsh Chief Officers Group
Pam Kelly – Chief Constable, Gwent Police
Matt Jukes – Chief Constable, South Wales Police
Claire Parmenter – Deputy Chief Constable, Dyfed-Powys Police
Paul Morris – Head of Police Liaison Unit
T/Superintendent Steve Thomas - Police Liaison Unit
Lynda Young – Police Liaison Unit, Group Secretary

Invited attendees

Karin Phillips – Deputy Director – Community Safety Division, Welsh Government

2. Apologies for Absence

Mark Collins – Chief Constable, Dyfed Powys Police

3. John Griffiths MS, Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting was to give Senedd Members the opportunity to discuss Policing in Wales, the Police response to Covid19, partnership working and how best to engage with Senedd Members in the future.

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

AM Gave an overview of policing during the Covid pandemic stating that although Covid had been a difficult time for many it had also been a period for learning and development. Learning how to work together, within the four Welsh police forces and PCCs, particularly with Welsh Government Officials and Ministers, with regular contact opportunities to discuss an effective response, thus helping to mature the relationship between Policing, a non-devolved service and Welsh Government and the areas it was responsible for such as Health and Local Government. Highlighting that the Police valued the opportunity to be able to talk to Senedd Members and MP's on a regular basis during this time as it has proven extremely helpful.

The former All Wales Criminal Justice Board, now known as Criminal Justice in Wales which was in keeping with the new title of the four Police Chiefs and Commissioners group of Policing in Wales, had developed during lockdown, with a significant level of co-operation over the challenges within the criminal justice system. The joined up approach to reopen courts had been recognised by UK Ministers in terms of how the model and approach was working well in Wales.

The Policing Partnership Board for Wales had also developed during this time. The meeting created by the four Welsh Police Chiefs and Commissioners to engage with the First Minister, Ministers and Officials had addressed a number of issues such as tackling substance misuse, how we deal with equalities issues and engagement on this vital matter, including the Black Lives Matter campaign.

HMIC had produced a report on collaboration which referred to Wales as an exemplary model, showing how the four Chief Constables and Commissioners had worked collaboratively on a range of issues, often having to tackle different opinions yet still finding ways through those differences.

Summarising, AM suggested that although Covid19 has been quite negative, in terms of collaboration between Police, Health, Local Government and Welsh Government there had been and continue to be a lot of positives. PCC Michael asked the Members of the Senedd, what their general feeling was about the way policing responded to the Covid emergency and how did they feel about the delivery of neighbourhood policing services?

5. Carl Foulkes Chief Constable North Wales Police

CF Explained the preventative approach in Wales, working with partners to divert people from a life of crime with programmes like “Early Action Together.” Over six thousand front line staff had been trained in the Early Action Together programme with training continuing during the Covid period. The programme and training had already shown positive outcomes.

Outlined the different Policing environment in England to Wales and how the national approach in Wales had helped with working effectively together in a more consistent approach, CF stressed that this was not stopping forces from doing things differently within their local areas which best served their community.

CF emphasised the Welsh forces’ approach throughout Covid had been centred on the 4E’s, engage, explain, encourage, and finally enforce which was used as a last resort, stressing that doesn’t mean forces haven’t used enforcement where appropriate and proportionate. Currently in Wales two and half thousand fixed penalty notices had been issued as well as four music event fines and forces were still actively involved in policing, engaging and enforcing within the local communities as necessary. Although policing is non-devolved, Chiefs sat on a number of strategic partnership groups to help support the drive to tackle Covid.

CF outlined the planned Policing Event in March at the Senedd asking Senedd Members what would they like to see at the event and how best to shape future Cross Party Group meetings or engagement in the future either virtually or in person?

In addition Mr Foulkes reminded Senedd Members about expressions of interest should anyone be interested in going out on patrol in their constituencies once social distancing measures were lifted.

6. Questions and discussions

John Griffiths MS Chair

JG stated that his own experiences with the police had been very good, and Chief Constable Pam Kelly had been holding regular meetings with local Senedd Members, MPs and Council Leaders keeping everyone up to date and informed on policing issues around Covid. These meetings had conveyed positive feedback from the local community around visible proactive policing in the community.

JG then asked if any Senedd Members had any questions.

Elin Jones MS Llywydd (Plaid Cymru) Ceredigion

EJ voiced her own experiences from Ceredigion with Dyfed Powys Police and the Local Authority stating that the work had been excellent which had reduced potential tensions due to the introduction of local travel restrictions which also impacted on visitors coming to the area. All this reflected positively on the local level response. She also stated that, both in terms of her role as Llywydd and speaking to members in and out of the chamber from across Wales, everyone had been very complimentary of the co-operation of various agencies especially local authorities and police dealing in with the regulations.

Jeff Cuthbert – Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent

JC thanked John Griffiths for his positive words stating Gwent Police pride themselves on a one public service approach, as all four police services, and commissioners working with the public service boards, stating if it wasn't for this approach with the help of the general public's willingness to cooperate we could be in a different place. JC highlighted that police resources were nowhere near the levels they were compared to 2010 despite the recent uplift recruitment drive and emphasised without the support from members of the public things could be very different.

Pam Kelly – Chief Constable, Gwent Police

PK underlined the importance of relationships, during these difficult times and how good strong relationships with local authorities had assisted with joint enforcement and driving forward plans.

She raised concerns around mental health, vulnerability and domestic abuse and the importance we all understand and listen to what our communities feel, welcoming feedback from leaders and key stakeholders' feedback. Normal criminality continued and regrettably many criminals had also taken advantage of these times together with the economic impact and that Gwent Police had already seen a 25% increase in custody numbers. Showing the importance of how we all keep a close eye on our communities together around vulnerability, the impact on the economy which in turn had an impact on criminality.

Matt Jukes – Chief Constable, South Wales Police

MJ acknowledged this is the best period over the last 10 years in accessing and engagement with members of the Welsh Parliament and members of the UK Parliament, raising the frequency and quality of the engagement and MJ thanked Members of the Senedd and the wider political arena, for their support and engagement across all parties and communities.

MJ highlighted the additional work police had been doing to engage with those members of the community who were most vulnerable, not only victims of domestic abuse but also vulnerable children who hadn't been in schools due to the lockdown and were therefore less visible and that impacted on where police normally gathered their child protection referrals. Now children were back in schools, school officers

with the support of Welsh Government were able to carry out that very important part of the police response to child vulnerability.

Concerns were raised around the higher risk factor to our diverse communities in cities along with the multi-generational housing situation and how the police service were working hard to make sure there was no disproportionality in how this is policed.

MJ praised co-operation with Higher Education Institutions, the Universities and the local and national students unions. Although there had been concerns raised around the health situation on campuses there had been no more calls from student communities compared to other communities.

Dafydd Llywelyn – Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Whilst he totally supported and agreed with previous comments, DL wanted to add a balanced view to the relationship between policing and Welsh Government. At the beginning of the process, during those early stages of the virus mid to late March, the relationship wasn't as described now and that it had matured over the last 6 months, showing that it was very important that this open dialogue continued.

Claire Parmenter – Deputy Chief Constable, Dyfed-Powys Police

CP commented on the importance of focusing on the direction of travel for the future of policing in Wales. There had been some very good lessons learnt around service delivery, how policing responded to and engaged with the public. Whilst this was still ongoing there was a structure in place which would look at recovery and also at organisational change and efficiency to better serve the public.

Mark Isherwood MS (Conservative) North Wales

MI raised concerns recently covered in the press around offenders or potential offenders not going to prison because of Covid outbreaks in prisons, and asked what interaction the police were having with the prison and probation service in Wales to manage this.

What provisions or contingency plans are you making for public order issues with the growing concerns on the recent tightening on restrictions locally or UK wide?

Alun Michael - Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales

AM confirmed at the start there were some concerns around early prison releases however a group was established with representation from the police. As a result of the group's good planning that turned out not to be in the numbers initially feared so the issue was resolved, proving how vital early communication and relationship building was in resolving matters. Criminal Justice in Wales established a recovery group which had developed into a steering group for that collective approach which met regularly to maintain this vital communication link and problem solving capability via high level engagement.

In relation to Public Order, he emphasised this is a health emergency and therefore it was health that needed to drive the appropriate regulations and requirements around what enforcement should be. The Police will support their Local Authority colleagues and colleagues in health but really it is about an individual and collective responsibility. AM highlighted the recent collaborative and behind the scene work Police and Local Authorities had done together to tackle issues in Ogmore, Cardiff Bay and Swansea.

Matt Jukes – Chief Constable, South Wales Police

Answering the Public Order questions, MJ explained Policing in Wales worked in two regions with the three Southern forces working closely together and with North Wales Policing having strong operational connections with the North West of England. Police had regional coordination cells for the mobilisation of public order resources and policing regularly tested and exercised its ability to mobilise people at short notice to move resources as quickly as 1 hour to an emergency response. MJ confirmed this had been done on a number of occasions during this period, however there had been very limited anti-mask or anti-vaccinations protests across Wales but with other protests such as the Black Lives Matter and other protests from London which Policing in Wales was often called on to support.

There were well-established arrangements for planned protests, particularly for the capital city in South Wales but also across Wales bringing together very experienced commanders and street teams. Part of being a capital city police force meant it had a lot of experience in policing protests. There was often a need to call on neighbouring Welsh forces to provide additional support and as seen recently South Wales officers had provided reciprocal support showing how effectively the four Welsh forces were working together.

MJ added that police saw no significant issues arising from the early release of prisoners.

Ioan Berrin (Support Staff for Helen Mary Jones MS, Plaid Cymru, Mid and West Wales)

Asked if there were any difficulties controlling the border line of Llanelli town with it being just the town not a county affected by local lockdown restrictions.

Dafydd Llywelyn – Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Briefly mentioned due to the size of the county in Carmarthenshire and due to this outbreak being local to the Llanelli area that this required a different response to avoid wider ramifications on other areas within the county.

Claire Parmenter – Deputy Chief Constable, Dyfed-Powys Police

The targeted local authority and police approach using the 4 E's with enforcement had helped to reduce the numbers. Confirming the outbreak was in a small number of wards within Llanelli hence the targeted approach on this occasion.

Dafydd Llywelyn – Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Noted that the work of the licencing departments was so important during this phase especially around the night time economy activity. Licencing departments had worked hard in Carmarthenshire carrying out a number of checks and had closed some premises down for not meeting the standards as well as issuing improvement notices, emphasising it was not just one agency working on enforcement and it was a partnership approach.

John Griffiths MS, Chair

Stated there had been suggestions that there could be more hyper local restrictions approaches so even smaller than Llanelli and asked about the practicalities of policing such a small area?

Pam Kelly – Chief Constable, Gwent Police

Stated it was expected that we would see more local restrictions and more localised lockdowns and whilst the police would always support local authorities the real question was how that could be sustained with the additional prevention and enforcement work over potentially another 6 months. When looking at policing calls and demands currently some of the calls and demand, especially over the weekend, had been as busy as New Year's Eve at times. So whenever there was a change in terms of the restrictions, local or otherwise, policing saw a significant spike in demand as well as the expectation from local communities to see visible policing and joint enforcement work with local authorities. Maintaining that had to be achieved via a behavioural change and it was this behavioural change that could save us not enforcement.

Over the coming days it was believed there would be an announcement from UK Government about money that might be available to either local authorities, policing or both, for what had been called Covid Marshalls. It was unknown what funds would be made available to policing, however police funding was needed to continue to sustain the prevention and enforcement work which was being carried out. PK stressed the Welsh forces really welcomed the support of the Senedd Members in making sure the funding goes directly into policing and local authorities so the money could be used quickly to make a difference within communities for prevention and enforcement purposes and not allocated elsewhere.

Paul Morris – Head of Police Liaison Unit

PM wished to thank the Chair for hosting and sponsoring the Cross Party Group as well as the up and coming Policing event in March, encouraging the members of the Senedd and staff to promote attendance wherever possible.

PM highlighting the recent interview with Chief Constable Jukes talking about assaults on officers with the increase of Covid related assaults of coughing and spitting. UK Government was looking to introduce a Police Covenant to provide enhanced support for police officers and staff along the lines of the armed forces

covenant. He asked Senedd Members if they could give this consideration on how this support could be provided in Wales to make sure officers and staff in Wales receive exactly the same level of support as they did in England.

John Griffiths MS, Chair

JG closed the session thanking everyone for their attendance stating the meeting had been very helpful in giving everyone some extremely important matters to think about.

It had been good to hear engagement and communication had been good at a Wales and more local level, thanking everyone for that and stressing that needed to continue.

Reminding members of the Policing event in early March which would be a great way to start the New Year highlighting it was also be close to the election campaigns. He stressed the importance of keeping good engagement between now and then and his office would be in touch with police and Senedd Members to look at what members would like to see at the event and what level of engagement is preferred in the new year.