

COMMUNITIES & HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting: 16 March 2021

At: 6.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillor Mark Roberts (Chair) in the chair; Councillor John McGahan (Vice-Chair); Councillors Angie Clark, Dickie Davies, Charles Gibson, Janet Mobbs, Adrian Nottingham, Andy Sorton and Matt Wynne.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors and officers were invited to declare any interests which they had in any of the items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

2. CALL-IN

There were no call-in items to consider.

3. SCRUTINY OF THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP OF POLICING IN GREATER MANCHESTER

The Chair reported that this item had been placed on the agenda at his request.

The Chair stated that he had convened the meeting to allow the committee to scrutinise the political leadership of policing in Greater Manchester in the light of the report on the inspection of the service provided to victims of crime by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services that had been released on 10 December 2020.

It was acknowledged that officers on the frontline had a challenging time, particularly over the last year with the onset of the coronavirus pandemic; but given the additional challenges posed by the introduction of iOPS and reduced officer numbers the strains felt by the service had been around for some time.

The Chair stated that at future meetings of the scrutiny committee it was anticipated that members would have the opportunity to speak to chief officers within Greater Manchester Police to discuss operational matters.

Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester) and Baroness Beverley Hughes (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime) attended the meeting to respond to councillors' questions.

Mr Burnham addressed the meeting and stated that in discussing the concerns in the HMI report, nothing that would be said would detract from the work being undertaken by officers across Greater Manchester. It was stated that GMP had struggled to cope in terms of capacity and performance resulting from the loss of 2,000 officers since 2010 as a result of government cuts. However, it was acknowledged that the way in which those

cuts had been implemented had contributed to a loss of connection with the communities that GMP was supposed to serve. It was further stated that a policing model had been implemented that didn't deliver the right level of support to victims of crime.

Mr Burnham stated that the removal of dedicated inspectors for each GM district had been identified as a mistake and that there had been a consequent retreat from partnership working. While there had been some progress on a number of issues between 2016-18, this had not been sustained, and iOPS had been identified as a factor in that. Mr Burnham expressed his concern that there had been a negative excuses culture within GMP and that questions from the Mayor's Office in relation to the introduction of iOPS had not always been answered to his satisfaction.

It was stated that there had been some recent improvements, including the introduction of a named officer and PCSO for each ward in Greater Manchester which had now gone live on GMP's website so that any resident can now find a designated officer for their community. Work was taking place to introduce more senior policing cover based on policing divisions and recruitment of additional officers was ongoing with 670 more officers in the force than in 2017.

Finally, Mr Burnham confirmed that work was taking place to appoint a new Chief Constable as quickly as possible.

The following comments were then made/ issues raised:-

- In response a question about the deployment of policing resources, it was stated that this was based on risk and the crime profile of the area. It was confirmed that the police had operational independence and were able to deploy resources where they believed they could best use them to protect the public.
- Concern was expressed in relation to the apparent slow pace with which the GM Police, Fire and Crime Panel had convened to meet to discuss and respond to the urgency presented by the HMI report.
- The Mayor's Office was open to ideas on how scrutiny arrangements for policing and crime could be improved and strengthened.
- There was a monitoring process and action plan in place specifically around the issue of the reporting of crime.
- In response to a question about when the Mayor had been made aware of the issues raised in the HMI report, the Mayor confirmed that this had been when he had the opportunity to read the report.
- It was stated that the initial response from GMP had been that the report had got it wrong and that the problems had been overestimated; however the Mayor stated that upon reading the whole report he had concluded that the problems were much more serious than the force had realised. It was further stated that the same was true of iOPS where questions had not been fully answered in the way that they should have been.
- The Mayor stated that in his role as Police and Crime Commissioner he had to hold the Chief Constable to account and that was why he had concluded new leadership was needed to unpack the issues the HMI report had identified.
- There had been a defensive culture within GMP that had inhibited and prevented officers from reporting issues, and there needed to be a structural and cultural change within the force to remedy this.

- There had been some strengths identified within the report including how the police respond to incidents of rape or serious sexual assault and there had been some praise for the work undertaken with those who had been victims of domestic abuse.
- In response to a question about whether the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had considered resigning on the grounds that the government grant available to Greater Manchester Police was £100m more than in 2010; there had been a lack of accountability for crimes not being recorded or investigated; and that there had been a further 4,500 crimes that had gone unrecorded since Christmas, the Mayor stated that he rejected the premise of the question. It was reiterated that the police were operationally independent and that the function of the Mayor was to hold the police to account, and the ultimate power was to create new leadership and that he had acted accordingly and a plan was now in place to put things right,.
- After the next round of recruitment, GMP would still be 1,000 officers short of its staffing complement in 2010.
- Government grants to police forces did not appear to reflect the demands and needs of local forces.
- The Mayor confirmed that he had asked the former Chief Constable to retire in response to the HMI report and the issues with the implementation of iOPS.
- The Mayor further acknowledged the service that the former Chief Constable had provided to communities across Greater Manchester including the leadership shown during the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena and overseeing a successful recruitment drive that had improved the diversity of the force.
- The Deputy Mayor confirmed that she had received a briefing with HMIC approximately ten days prior to the release of the report where the contents of the report had been discussed. Following questioning it was confirmed that this was subsequently relayed to the Mayor. The Chair then sought clarification on a previous statement from the Mayor, made earlier in the meeting, in relation to the point at which he had been made aware of the issues identified in the HMI report. The Mayor then stated that the Deputy Mayor had briefed him on the meeting with HMIC and that he subsequently met with the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable five days before the report was released. However, it was only once the Mayor had the opportunity to read the full text of the report that he was able to conclude that HMIC were correct in their view and that the leadership of GMP had underplayed their conclusions.

At this point in the proceedings the Mayor and Deputy Mayor left the meeting.

The following additional points were then made:-

- It was suggested that consideration needed to be given to introducing political balance to the composition of the Greater Manchester Police, Crime and Fire Panel.
- It was noted that the Panel was comprised of the cabinet members from each district council with portfolio responsibility for police and crime which meant that the Panel was dominated by members of the same political affiliation as the Mayor. It was queried whether this might impact on the effectiveness of the scrutiny function performed by the Panel.
- It was suggested that the model used to calculate the composition of the GM scrutiny panels produced a more representative outcome.
- It was suggested that the scrutiny arrangements for police and crime functions might be worthy of further analysis by way of a scrutiny review.

Communities & Housing Scrutiny Committee - 16 March 2021

- It would be useful for the Scrutiny Committee to receive regular reports on policing as part of its annual work programme.

RESOLVED – That Andy Burnham and Baroness Hughes be thanked for their attendance.

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm