

Monmouthshire Select Committee Minutes

Meeting of Public Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, The Rhadyr USK on Tuesday, 28th October, 2025 at 10.00 am

Councillors Present

County Councillor Armand Watts (Chair)

County Councillors: Jill Bond, Penny Jones, Tony Kear, Dale Rooke, Frances Taylor, Jan Butler, Emma Bryn, John Crook, Lisa Dymock, Tony Easson, Martyn Groucutt, M. Newell, Maureen Powell, Sue Riley, Angela Sandles, Jackie Strong, Peter Strong and Ann Webb

Officers in Attendance

Hazel Ilett, Scrutiny Manager
Sharran Lloyd, Community and Partner Development Manager
John Crandon, Community Safety Officer
Andrew Mason, Community safety Lead
Ian Muirhead, Community Safety Officer

External Invitees: Jane Hutt, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent, Sian Curley, Chief Executive of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and Connor Dumayne-Davis, Police Constable.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Steven Garratt, Meirion Howells, Malcolm Lane and Maria Stevens

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Steven Garrett, Meirion Howells, Malcom Lane and Maria Stevens. Councillor Malcolm Lane was substituted by Councillor Lisa Dymock. Councillor Maria Stevens was substituted by Councillor Peter Strong.

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Public Open Forum

None present.

4. Community Safety and Police Resources

The Police and Crime Commissioner Jane Hutt delivered a presentation on the Police, Crime and Justice Plan for Gwent, prior to answering Members questions on community safety and police resourcing. The Chair Councillor Watts thanked Jane for the presentation on the plan and noted the clarity in the plan and the five pillars and the public leaflet.

- Councillor Bond asked what is being done about misogyny, sexual abuse, and bad behaviour in schools, and whether there are initiatives to address these issues?

Jane described work with public health targeting boys in schools, upcoming initiatives involving solicitors discussing consent, and activities for the White Ribbon campaign.

- Councillor Bond asked for more detail about the nature of police liaison and the availability and involvement of officers to deliver safeguarding lessons, following the loss of the schools' liaison program.

Jane explained that funding for the school's liaison program was withdrawn by Welsh Government, leading Gwent Police to develop a new model where neighbourhood officers engage with schools. She described ongoing monitoring, partnership work with Welsh Government, and specific initiatives like public health projects targeting misogyny and legal professionals discussing consent in schools.

- Councillor Bond also asked about public confidence in the police and progress on institutional issues within Gwent Police.

Jane mentioned actions are being taken to maintain public confidence following negative media coverage, emphasising ongoing work to address institutional behaviour and support for staff. Jane outlined actions such as assembling advisory groups before negative media, supporting staff, and ongoing scrutiny and cultural work. She acknowledged more work is needed and is launching a deep dive into vulnerability.

- Councillor Bond asked if Jane had visited any Monmouthshire schools and how the impact of these initiatives would be seen, noting the importance of addressing broader equality issues beyond abuse.

Jane described the Safe Spaces Initiative in primary schools, the upcoming launch of a Charter for children and young people, and a strategic equality plan with dedicated funding for community groups. She referenced engagement in Abergavenny, addressing cohesion and feedback from local groups, and reiterated her commitment to building community support and visibility of these actions.

- Councillor Dymock asked about the Mystery Shopper initiative: how it works, findings so far, and how those findings are used to improve frontline services. She also asked when Jane last visited Caldicot Town Centre and Station, and what concerns residents raised during that visit.

Jane responded that she had visited Caldicot several times, most recently for Armed Forces Day and in the town centre, receiving positive feedback about anti-social behaviour initiatives and concerns about continued resourcing. She explained the Mystery Shopper exercise is authentic and based on direct conversations, with generally positive feedback in Caldicot but acknowledged that issues are raised when present.

- Councillor Dymock also asked about confidence in the accuracy and completeness of crime and incident data, especially regarding public reports and 101 call logging. She raised concerns that repeated incidents may not be accurately captured, affecting the neighbourhood police team's ability to respond, and asked about systems and oversight to ensure proper logging and accountability.

Regarding 101 call logging, Jane suggested discussing specific concerns offline, noted meetings about the issue, and referenced the HMIC inspection report which rated Gwent Police's crime data integrity as outstanding, but acknowledged there may be other factors to discuss further.

- Councillor Rooke asked about the police precept in Monmouthshire, noting it is about 25% higher than other counties, and questioned whether Monmouthshire is getting its fair share of resources. He also asked about the allocation of the 100 additional police officers recruited since October 2022, specifically how many were directed to Monmouthshire.

Jane explained that the precept is linked to the council tax base across Gwent and that all residents pay for policing collectively, similar to other public services. She stated there is no variation in service provision across the five local authorities, though the funding level differs due to the tax base. Jane acknowledged concerns about police visibility and noted that the Chief Constable's model focuses on increasing neighbourhood policing and visibility but also highlighted the need for officers to address modern crimes such as online fraud and safeguarding, which impacts visible presence. She said operational allocation details would need to be provided by policing colleagues.

Action: Chief Constable to provide the information.

- Councillor Kear asked Jane to highlight her successes since taking on the role and where improvements are needed.

Jane listed successes such as strengthening scrutiny and accountability, advancing the strategic equalities plan, establishing a strategic board for community safety, supporting the Safer Streets initiative, launching the Children's Charter, and increasing early intervention and prevention activities. She noted improved performance in 999 and 101 call handling, with Gwent Police often ranking in the top three to five forces.

- Councillor Kear also asked about trends in answering 999 and 101 calls, performance against the set budget, and how the budget links to police officer numbers.

Jane explained the budget process, current performance, and the challenge of no capital funding, and described ongoing collaboration with other forces to achieve efficiencies. She confirmed the Home Office sets police numbers and funding, and the Chief Constable invests in visible services through Community Action Teams.

- Councillor Kear asked about areas needing improvement and where Jane has had difficult conversations with the Chief Constable.

Jane answered that she is undertaking a deep dive into vulnerability, as highlighted in the HMIC report, indicating this is an area needing further work.

- Councillor Kear questioned the performance against the budget, and how it relates to police officer numbers? He referenced numbers of 1,509 police officers, 130 PCSO's, a £2.7 million shortfall, and a £190 million budget. He asked how many police officers and PCSO's there are for Gwent, and then specifically for Monmouthshire? He suggested that this information could have been provided at the meeting.

*Jane responded that she did not have the figures immediately, that they will be provided by the Chief Constable, clarifying that operational distribution is the Chief Constable's responsibility, not hers. She noted that some PCSO's are Welsh Government funded. Jane stated the budget is currently on track, but a deficit is forecast for the future, requiring efficiencies and collaboration. Jane confirmed efforts are being made to close the gap. She confirmed the Home Office sets police numbers and funding, and the Chief Constable invests in visible services. **Action: For the Chief Constable to provide the data.***

- Councillor Jones asked about county lines, specifically whose remit it falls under, the latest statistics or data, concerns about the withdrawal of school liaison officers and its possible correlation with county lines activity, the existence of dedicated police officers for county lines, whether they visit schools, and how this is monitored.

*Jane responded that a Chief Superintendent responsible for crime oversees county lines, and further data would be provided by the police. She explained that the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner funds various preventative initiatives, including youth offending services, the Fearless program (which visits schools and allows anonymous reporting), and the St Giles Trust (which works with high-risk youth by referral). Jane confirmed that these activities are ongoing and agreed to request specific policing data from the Chief Superintendent. **Action: To provide data on the delivery of County Lines material in Monmouthshire schools.***

- Councillor Webb asked whether police officers appreciate the help and assistance that county councillors can provide in any situation, mentioning a specific incident where her input was dismissed by an officer during a serious local situation. She also noted the importance of police presence at community and town council meetings and recent assurances from the local sergeant about improved attendance.

*Jane responded that elected representatives are a key source of intelligence in communities and emphasised the importance of their relationships with police. She encouraged councillors to request police attendance at council meetings. **Action: For the Police and Crime Commissioner to raise Councillor Webb's experience with the Chief Constable and the Chief Superintendent for neighbourhood policing.***

- Councillor Riley asked about Monmouthshire County Council's assistive tech service, specifically regarding funding and support for tracking watches used to help vulnerable people remain in their homes. She questioned whether the police could provide financial support for this service, noting the potential savings in police time when older people go missing.

Jane acknowledged the importance of initiatives like tracking devices for vulnerable people and mentioned the "Care Right Person" program and the Herbert Protocol, both aimed at supporting vulnerable adults, especially those with dementia. She offered to provide more information about these programs and ongoing work but indicated that, given the current financial situation, direct financial support from the police may not be feasible.

- Councillor Jackie Strong asked whether restorative justice is still an ongoing resource available within the community, referencing previous involvement with young people and the town council.

Jane replied that discussions are underway with Public Service Board partners and public health colleagues to advance restorative justice in Gwent. She noted that this is a timely question and advised that the OPCC's strategic equality plan, a dedicated £400,000 community cohesion fund and plans to expand restorative justice initiatives in partnership with public health and other agencies are being progressed. She encouraged groups to apply for funding to enhance community support and cohesion.

- Councillor Bryn asked how recent negative press and revelations about police forces have impacted the well-being, confidence, and pride within Gwent Police, and whether this has affected recruitment and retention.

Jane explained that Gwent Police has established a culture board and a cultural strategy to address these challenges, including working with the University of South Wales on real-time training for cultural and ethical issues. She stated that the Chief Constable provides internal assurance and support, and there is significant investment in well-being services. Jane noted that, at present, there is no significant impact on recruitment and retention in Gwent, but the situation is monitored closely.

- Councillor Peter Strong highlighted the importance of continuity in local policing teams, noting that recent stability has improved relationship-building in Caldicot and expressed support for the local policing team in Caldicot. He praised the skill, persistence, and compassion of Gwent Police as seen in the "Crash Detectives" TV series, suggesting it reflects well on the force and benefits viewers and requested that Jane convey appreciation to the officers featured in the program.
- Councillor Dymock questioned how many survey responses informing the police and crime plan were from Monmouthshire residents, and how does that feedback influence local policing priorities?

Jane confirmed the survey responses can be disaggregated by local authority area and that the Chief Constable's priorities must deliver against the police, crime, and justice

*plan, which is informed by such feedback. **Action: To provide the information on how many service responses were from Monmouthshire residents.***

- Councillor Dymock also asked which schools in Monmouthshire have been visited, what support have they received, and are solicitors being placed in schools?

*Jane clarified solicitors are not being placed in schools, but an initiative is starting where solicitors volunteer to talk to young people about consent. **Action: For information on school visits and support to be provided by the Chief Constable.***

- Councillor Dymock questioned whether the survey information was available?

*Jane stated she did not have the survey information available at the meeting but will provide it to the committee ~ **Action: to provide the data.***

- Councillor Bond asked how are schools liaison officers engaging with schools, are they available, and do they deliver safeguarding or educational lessons, especially after the loss of the previous program?

*Jane explained the previous Welsh Government-funded program was withdrawn, and now neighbourhood officers are connected to schools with regular contact and engagement. There are ongoing efforts to strengthen this, and new partnership proposals are being developed. Jane agreed to provide further information following the meeting. **Action: To provide details on safeguarding sessions and other educational sessions between the Police and schools since the loss of the schools' liaison officers.***

- The Chair Councillor Watts referenced an article published in the summer of 2025 about Gwent Police's public rating and asked Jane how the five pillars would address this perception.

Jane responded that she could not comment on the article without seeing the data but assured the Committee that improving trust and confidence is a priority.

- Councillor Watts asked questioned whether Gwent Police have a designated hate crime officer and what interventions are being undertaken to prevent hate crime and extremism, especially in schools.

Jane confirmed there is an officer responsible for hate crime but emphasised it is a broader effort involving community cohesion funding and early intervention strategies.

- Councillor Watts asked Jane to confirm that answers would be provided to the Committee in relation to the 100 new officers and the proportion allocated to Monmouthshire, noting that there are outstanding questions for response by Gwent Police.

Action: Jane agreed to request the information from the Chief Constable and provide it to the committee.

Chair's Summary

The Chair thanked Jane for her patience in answering member's questions and for attending the session. It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting and a list of outstanding questions would be forwarded to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable for a response. The Committee agreed to invite the Chief Constable to a future meeting to discuss the responses.

5. To note the date and time of the next meeting: 15th December 2025

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.