

Report to: Sandwell Metropolitan Council

Report of: Councillor Darren Cooper - Chair of West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Date: 20 October 2015

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel - Update 2014-2015

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report sets out the work of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel during 2014- 2015. Sandwell has one member and one substitute member serving on the Panel.

2 It is recommended that:

- a) The information contained in the report be noted; and**
- b) Members consider whether there are any recommendations relating to the PCC and policing and crime in Sandwell that could be championed by the West Midlands Police and Crime Sandwell Panel Members.**

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel was established in November 2012 as part of the new governance arrangements for policing to provide the checks and balances in relation to the performance of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Panel consists of 12 councillors representing the 7 districts across the West Midlands and 2 independent members. Named substitutes have also been appointed for each councillor member.
- 3.2 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Councillor Darren Cooper who is Chair. Councillor Julie Webb is Councillor Cooper's named substitute. Councillor David Hosell is also a substitute member for the Association of Black Country Authorities.
- 3.3 Panel meeting papers, its statutory and scrutiny reports, together with more information about the Panel and meeting dates can be found on the Panel's website: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk.

4 The Role of the Police and Crime Panel

- 4.1 The Panel has a dual role to both support and scrutinise the work of the PCC. The Panel acts as a critical friend on behalf of West Midland residents and has a number of statutory tasks:
- Scrutinise and comment on the PCC's Police and Crime Plan
 - Scrutinise and make a recommendation on the policing precept and budget for policing.

- Review the PCC's Annual Report
- Hold confirmation hearings before the PCC makes certain key appointments.
- Handle complaints about the PCC and Deputy PCC, referring serious complaints to the Independent Police Complaints Commission.

5 Work of the Panel during 2014-15

5.1 The Panel met six times during the year and undertook a number of statutory tasks (more details in 5.2) and further developed its scrutiny role (See 5.6).

5.2 The Panel carried out a number of statutory tasks during 2014-2015:

- In July 2014 following the untimely death of Bob Jones, the Panel appointed Yvonne Mosquito as Acting PCC. In September 2014, following the election of David Jamieson as PCC the Panel held a confirmation hearing for his Deputy PCC and Yvonne Mosquito was appointed.
- Due to the death of Bob Jones the PCC's Annual Report was delayed and the Panel reviewed this in September 2014.
- In February 2015 the Panel reviewed the PCC's policing precept and budget for 2015/16.
- In February 2015 the Panel commented on changes to the PCC's Police and Crime Plan and requested that the PCC:
 - Included more information on the targets and baselines for the headline measures contained in the Plan, to allow communities and the Panel to track and judge the success of this work;
 - Included more detail on how improvements will be achieved in each of the areas of hidden crimes (such as child abuse and female genital mutilation);
 - Included issues relating to alcohol in the Plan given its impact of alcohol in the region;
 - Included information about how the force will discharge its Prevent duties and support local authorities in theirs;
 - Considered reintroducing the police cadets programme for young people; and
 - Gave attention to ex-military personnel within the work on mental health.

- In addition, since the beginning of 2015-16, the Panel has held three confirmatory inquiries: for Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officers for the Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands, and the new Chief Constable.

5.3 Panel meetings also gave Members the opportunity to scrutinise progress by the PCC and Deputy PCC on a range of issues including:

- Stop and search;
- the Innovation and Technology Task Force and the WMP2020 Programme; and
- commissioning support services for victims of crime.

5.4 Question time with the Commissioner raised other pertinent issues such as:

- preparedness for dealing with local terrorism threats, following the attacks in Paris;
- closure of police front desk offices in the West Midlands;
- the future role of the PCC given the progress of the Combined Authority;
- managing disturbances at football matches; and
- the need for better driver education for young drivers to prevent deaths and serious injury.

5.5 The Youth Justice Board was also invited back to report progress on the restorative justice project.

5.6 Scrutiny inquiries during 2014-15

The Panel has established a programme of mini-scrutiny inquiries to examine particular topics in more detail, with key witnesses, with a view to making recommendations to the PCC.

- In April 2014 the Panel agreed to undertake a piece of work looking at the PCC's role in **integrated working for preventing violence to vulnerable people**. The focus of this became female genital mutilation. Evidence gathering was carried out in November 2014 and January 2015. The report was subsequently published in June 2015 with a well-received press launch, supported by the Sandwell MBC communications office. A range of recommendations were made to partners as well as West Midlands Police and the PCC.

- The report led to the establishment of a West Midlands Regional Taskforce, chaired by Head Teacher, Hazel Pulley. It is expected this will be just for one year and the first report to the Panel is due in January 2016.

5.7 Throughout the year the Panel has also dealt with complaints submitted about the conduct of the PCC and signposted a number of cases that fell beyond the Panel's remit onto to the appropriate body.

6 Work Programme 2015-16

For 2015-16 the Panel have agreed to take matters relating to the budget and the Police and Crime Plan and scrutinise these through the year, in addition to carrying out the specific statutory duties. Topics will include:

- Estates capital budget
- Hidden crimes
- The local role in responding to national threats
- Performance data
- Restorative Justice.

In addition, the Panel proposes to undertake a further scrutiny inquiry into partnership working. The proposed focus of this inquiry is to examine how the PCC is strengthening engagement with partners to achieve objectives set out in the Police and Crime Plan. In particular, this would consider the current community safety funding model and possible alternative approaches.

7 Raising the Panel's Profile and Public Engagement

7.1 The Panel has a duty to raise awareness of it with key stakeholders, the public and the media. The relationship the Panel builds in the local area with the Overview and Scrutiny Committees across the Region; Community Safety Partnerships; and other partners (e.g. health) is key to its success.

7.2 Efforts have continued to engage the public at meetings by holding them at venues across the region and through the introduction of public question time. This can raise issues in a timely way, and questions were asked on the closure of police front desk offices in the West Midlands and the role of the Commissioner in dealing with complaints.

7.3 However, public attendance has been disappointing. The Panel makes use of webcasting facilities where they exist. The 8 September 2014 meeting is archived at http://www.coventry.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/144458 and the 2 February 2015 meeting is archived at http://www.birmingham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/163516.

7.4 The Panel communicates via Twitter (@westmidspcp) and press releases are distributed to the local media contacts. The Panel has a standalone website: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk

7.5 Panel update reports have also been presented at some Council meetings.

8 Panel Resources and Officer Support

8.1 The Panel continues to operate within the limits of the Home Office Grant. The Panel agreed that Members would not use this to draw special responsibility allowances but Member travel and carer expenses can be claimed.

8.2 The Birmingham Scrutiny Office acts as the Panel Secretariat. Support is also provided by Birmingham legal officers, a Sandwell MBC press officer and a Solihull finance officer.

9 Opportunities for Further Dialogue with Overview and Scrutiny

9.1 As we shape the Panel's work programme for 2015/16 and assess the impact, actions and decisions of the PCC there are opportunities for further dialogue and closer working with local scrutiny committees. A mechanism to share future work programmes and recommendations arising from scrutiny work would assist this process.

9.2 Sandwell Police and Crime Panel Members are able to champion recommendations that arise from Overview and Scrutiny inquiries which relate to policing and crime in Sandwell.

9.3 Elected members from all parties should be encouraged to raise issues relating to policing and crime with the Sandwell Police and Crime Panel Members.

10 Background papers

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Minutes and Agenda

Location: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk

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