

Report to: Sandwell Metropolitan Council

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

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel - Update October 2015 – February 2016

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report sets out the work of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel since the last report presented on 20 October 2015. Sandwell has one member and two substitute members serving on the Panel.

2 It is recommended that:

- a) The information contained in the report be noted;**
- b) Members note the current recruitment campaign for two independent panel members; and**
- c) 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 Cllr Darren Cooper who is its Chair. Cllr Julie Webb is Cllr Cooper's named substitute. Cllr 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 Recruitment of Two Independent Panel Members

- 5.1 The Panel is currently looking to co-opt two independent members to serve on the Panel from May 2016 until May 2020 to work alongside elected members. The Panel secretariat is liaising with Sandwell MBC's communication team to promote the vacancies locally and we would welcome members' support with this.
- 5.2 Applicants must be over 18 and live or work in the West Midlands. This is a voluntary position (an unpaid role). However, travel expenses can be claimed and induction and other training will be given.
- 5.3 More information and an application form are available at <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/get-involved/recruitment-of-independent-panel-members/>
The closing date is midnight Sunday 6th March.

6 Work of the Panel (October 2015 – February 2016)

- 6.1 The Panel met four times since October 2015 and undertook a number of statutory tasks (more details in 6.2) and further developed its scrutiny role (See 6.5).
- 6.2 The Panel carried out a number of statutory tasks:
- In October 2015 the Panel held a Confirmation Hearing for the appointment of Chief Constable;
 - In February 2015 the Panel reviewed the PCC's policing precept and budget for 2016/17.
- 6.3 In addition to these statutory duties the Panel agreed to examine matters relating to the budget and the Police and Crime Plan in greater detail. Topics looked at include:
- Estates capital budget;
 - The operating Model for the WMP2020 Programme;
 - The use of budget reserves;
 - Hidden crimes; and
 - The local role in responding to national threats, including cyber-crime.
- 6.4 Question time with the Commissioner raised other pertinent issues such as:
- Proposals for collaboration between the police and fire services; and
 - Neighbourhood policing.
- 6.5 The Panel has continued its programme of mini-scrutiny inquiries examining particular topics in more detail, with key witnesses, with a view to making recommendations to the PCC:
- In November 2015 the Panel looked the Police and Crime Commissioner's arrangements for Community Safety Grants and explored whether the current approach of dividing community safety funding between the seven districts was the most efficient and most likely to secure real outcomes for people. The Panel's report contains five principles for the PCC to consider when making a final decision on future funding (A local funding approach is vital, simplified monitoring arrangements, longer term funding, revisiting the proposed grant cuts and exploring opportunities for joint working across the districts). The report and the PCC's response can be found at <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/publications/>

- In January 2016 the Panel considered a six-month progress report on the implementation of the Panel's Tackling FGM in the West Midlands report. The Panel welcomed the progress made by the PCC, West Midlands Police, the West Midlands FGM Task Force, local authorities, and a number of health, public health and community safety agencies who had reported back to the Panel. Members felt it was important to maintain a high profile of FGM and agreed to further updates. The Panel's report can be found at <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/publications/>

6.6 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.

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 public question time. This can raise issues in a timely way, and questions were asked on 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 following meetings are available to view:

12 October 2015 - http://www.birmingham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/193783

23 November 2015 – http://www.coventry.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/184800

1 February 2016 - http://www.birmingham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/209591

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 2016/17 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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