

Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board

26 October and 14 December, 2016

Summary of Matters Considered

Report of the Chair, Councillor Crompton

The Scrutiny Board met on 26 October and 14 December, 2016 and the following items were considered.

I have selected the main points of the discussion, which I feel members of the Council will be particularly interested to know more about. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmisis/>

West Midlands Police 2020 – Changing the Face of Policing

Chief Superintendent Matthew Ward, Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board, provided a report and presentation to update the Scrutiny Board on the West Midlands Police changing programme WMP2020. The presentation highlighted that the new vision for West Midlands Police was to prevent crime, protect the public and to help those in need and it set out the reasons for change.

The Board heard that in relation to Sandwell there was a need to operate differently and to focus on resourcing. Some of the crimes in Sandwell reflected the moving crime profile nationally as follows:-

- 90 victims of modern day slavery within a mile radius of West Bromwich Police Station;
- human trafficking;
- child sexual exploitation (CSE);
- female genital mutilation (FGM);
- honour placed violence;
- missing people (900).

The Board recognised that good partnership working was essential to prevent escalation of these types of crimes and the cost of addressing the impact of crime was critical to operating differently in Sandwell. Early intervention, early help, troubled families and targeted youth support were all areas of partnership working and training, led by Sandwell MBC.

The Board welcomed that all six police stations, in the six towns, will be kept open and that the Council, business and other partners' community safety functions are expected to operate at one single point of contact for the residents. Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) are to be retained and co-located in Sandwell; the number of officers will be maintained until 2020. There will also be increased numbers of neighbourhood officers and more response officers in Sandwell who will have new technology, body camera and smart phones out on location.

The Board welcomed the focus of early intervention, intelligence sharing and the success of reducing reoffending in Sandwell. There are changes to policing roles to encourage community participation in local schemes ; funding and support will be available for local communities to carry out initiatives for themselves; training will be provided to organisations and Council employees.

The Board welcomed that West Midlands Police are performing above the National Home Office figures and that crime can be reported and tracked on line and by using social media. An application (APP) for Active Citizens will play an important role in communications moving forward.

Trading Standards Financial Scams and Doorstep Crime

The Board received a report highlighting the Trading Standards role in relation to Financial Scams and Doorstep Crime, its impact on victims, the control strategies and the team's achievements in 2016. Under the Care Act 2014, the Council has a duty to protect the elderly from financial abuse.

The National Trading Standards Board had established a National Scams team to tackle scams on a co-ordinated basis, working with many partners including local authorities. Most scam mail comes from abroad; it could be intercepted at point of entry into the UK but cannot be interfered with once it enters the postal system. The National Scams team rely on the co-operation of local authority Trading Standards services. Research indicates that victims are vulnerable, elderly, isolated, lonely and trusting.

The Council's website signposts people to information and support; partners and voluntary organisation also signpost and support but take up of the support is dependent on the individual actively seeking assistance.

In previous years, there had been a police officer seconded to the trading standards team conducting door to door and community safety awareness sessions as well as carrying out criminal investigations. A seconded police officer was helpful when attending victims homes when the offender was onsite or likely to return, as Trading Standards officers have no power of arrest.

The Board welcomed the work Trading Standards was carrying out to reduce the impact of financial scams and doorstep crime in Sandwell.

Updates from the Chair and Vice-Chair:

(a) CCTV Centre Roway Lane

The Board visited the CCTV control room and received a briefing. The control room opened in 2010 and had been open 24 hours a day, every day since. Four employees operated on each eight hour shift and in total there was a team of 24 trained and licensed Security Industry Associates (SIA).

The Board highlighted a number of community safety benefits relating to CCTV monitoring and intercom access for residents in high rise blocks in Sandwell and town centres. The Board welcomed that CCTV and intercom provision had an impact on residents, making the community safer and stronger, healthier, happier and reducing the cost of criminal activity.

A report detailing the findings and recommendations of the Board arising from the site visit to the CCTV Centre, Roway Lane will be presented to Cabinet at its next meeting.

West Bromwich Police Station

The Board discussed about the Triage vehicle and had a visit to the Call Centre. Actions arising from the visit to the Police Station in October had been moved forward and the minutes of the meeting 26 October 2016 summarised the WMP 2020 focus of the visit.

Site visit, Oldbury Custody Block

The Board visited the facility and including the drugs and alcohol, physical health and mental health services on site to support the individual at the earliest point.

The control room was responsive and organised monitoring a range of prisoners and situations. From individual complex cases or young offenders, where close monitoring was required through to multiple prisoners at peak times, where everyone was required to be vigilant under stressful situations.

Early intervention prevents the person from entering the prison system and would prevent more complex issues further down the line.

Domestic Abuse Advocates work stream

The focus of the work stream is Domestic Abuse Advocates. Meetings have been held with the Domestic Abuse Lead officer, the Cabinet Member for Public Health and the Chief Executive Officer of Sandwell Women's Aid (SWA) organisation. SWA are commissioned by the Council to provide domestic abuse advice and support for Sandwell, working closely with partners and other voluntary organisations to raise funding and develop the processes for women, men and children who were victims of abuse to access the services they need. A report will be presented to a meeting of the work stream group in February 2017.

Drugs, Alcohol and Mental Health work stream

The Vice-Chair is leading on this work stream. Research is progressing and further information about the scope will be available following a meeting of the work stream group in February 2017.

Councillor Crompton

Chair of the Community Safety, Highways and Environment Scrutiny Board