

Report to: Sandwell Metropolitan Council

Report of: Councillor Yvonne Davies, Leader and West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Member

Date: 10 March 2020

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Update February 2020

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Bi-annual reports on the activities of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel are presented to Sandwell MBC for consideration. Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Yvonne Davies and Cllr Farut Shaeen. Cllr Richard Jones is named substitute.
- 1.2 This report reflects on the work of the Panel during 2019/2020 Municipal Year up to February.

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 Police and Crime Commissioner or policing and crime matters that could be championed by Sandwell's West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Members.**

3 Role of the Police and Crime Panel

- 3.1 The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel was established in November 2012 as part of the new governance arrangements for policing. Under these arrangements the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) sets the strategic direction and budget for local policing and holds the Chief Constable to account for an efficient and effective police force.
- 3.2 The Police and Crime Panel provides the checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC.
- 3.3 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 Midlands residents. It reviews and scrutinises the decision and actions of the PCC, makes reports and recommendations and fulfils a number of statutory tasks.

4 Panel Membership

- 4.1 The Panel consists of 12 councillors representing the 7 West Midland districts. The membership reflects the political balance of the region. Named substitutes are appointed for each councillor member. Two independent members also serve on the Panel who were appointed following a regional advertisement and competitive interview process.
- 4.2 In July 2019 the Panel appointed Councillor Ken Hawkins (Solihull) as Chair and Cllr Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham) as Vice Chair for the 2019-2020 Municipal Year.
- 4.3 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Yvonne Davies and Cllr Farut Shaeen. Cllr Richard Jones is named substitute.
- 4.4 Panel meeting papers, meeting dates, its statutory and scrutiny reports, together with more information about the Panel can be found on the Panel's website: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk. All 2019/20 meetings have been live streamed.

5 Panel Resources and Officer Support

- 5.1 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 travel and carer expenses can be claimed.
- 5.2 Dudley's Chief Executive supports the Panel and the Birmingham Scrutiny Office acts as the secretariat. Support is also provided by Birmingham legal officers and a Solihull finance officer.

6 Core Work Programme –Statutory Tasks

- 6.1 The Panel has five statutory responsibilities that are the core element of its work programme:
- Scrutinise and make a recommendation on the PCC's proposed policing precept and budget, with the power to veto the precept;
 - Scrutinise and comment on the PCC's Police and Crime Plan;
 - Review the PCC's Annual Report;
 - Hold confirmation hearings before the PCC makes certain senior appointments; and
 - Handle non-criminal complaints about the PCC, referring serious complaints to the Independent Office for Police Conduct. (Task delegated to the Birmingham Monitoring Officer).
- 6.2 Panels are encouraged to also undertake wider exploratory work to build its knowledge and insight to hold the PCC to account.

7 Highlights from 2019/2020

7.1 July 2019

Confirmation Hearing for Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner - The Panel held a confirmation hearing and questioned the PCC's proposed appointee to assess his suitability for the post. The Panel recommended the PCC should appoint Mr Bertie.

7.2 September 2019

Panel members received a briefing on police finance before examining the PCC's Budget Outturn and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Review of the PCC's Annual Report - The Panel considered the PCC's draft Annual Report and the progress made during the previous year towards the Police and Crime Plan priorities. Members made several suggestions to the PCC which were incorporated in his final version of the report.

7.3 October 2019

Members visited Lloyd House Police Headquarters and received briefings from the PCC and Deputy Chief Constable. A tour of the force contact centre provided an opportunity to see how calls and 'live chat' communications are handled.

7.4 November 2019

A group of Panel Members represented the West Midlands at the Annual Police and Crime Panel Conference and attended several topical police and crime workshops.

7.5 January 2020

The Panel became a member of the National Association of Police, Fire and Crime Panels formed for the purpose of developing a collective voice for Panels and to share best practice.

The Panel questioned the PCC about the progress of the Estates Strategy, seeking assurance on the decisions reached about the future demand and viability of the police estate and obtaining best value in any transactions.

7.6 February 2020

The Panel reviewed the Police and Crime Commissioner's proposed policing precept and budget for 2020/21; The Panel's letter and the PCC's response are available at <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/publications/>

7.7 Panel meetings have also provided members with the opportunity to question the PCC on the recruitment of additional officers, the allocation of government surge funding for police activities, as well as the PCC's focus on addressing school exclusions, vehicle thefts, the expansion of the police cadets scheme and the impact of youth diversional activities.

8 Tackling Knife Crime and Violence – Scrutiny Review

8.1 In January the Panel began an in-depth scrutiny review into knife crime and violence. This was a key area of local concern and the Panel sought to examine how the PCC was contributing to and facilitating integrated working to prevent and respond to the issue.

8.2 To date Members have heard from the PCC, the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit, West Midlands Police and Public Health England to understand the causes and extent of knife crime and violence and to examine how a multi-agency public health approach can effect lasting change. Members have learnt about the police response and also the preventative work and interventions that are taking place and will further examine their impact.

8.3 Some challenges have been identified at this early stage of the scrutiny review, notably, the difficulties of data sharing between organisations, including local authorities, and how the uncertainty of annual funding settlements impact on long-term planning.

8.4 This piece of work will continue into the new year before the Panel agree the findings and develop recommendations for the Police and Crime Commissioner.

9 Looking Ahead to 2020/2021

9.1 As the Panel shapes its work programme for 2020/2021 to assess the impact, actions and decisions of the new Police and Crime Commissioner, there are opportunities for further dialogue and closer working with local scrutiny committees.

9.2 Following the election of the new PCC one of the Panel's first tasks will be to review the Police and Crime Plan issued by the PCC ensuring it reflects the priorities of residents.

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

Background Papers

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Minutes and Agenda: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk

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