

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council**23 March 2021****West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Update March 2021****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 Maria Crompton and Cllr Farut Shaeen. Cllr Richard Jones is named substitute.
- 1.2 This report reflects on the work of the Panel up to March 2021.

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 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 Panel provides the checks and balances in relation to the performance of the PCC, acting as a critical friend on behalf of West Midlands residents.
- 3.3 The Panel has a dual role to both support and scrutinise the work of the PCC. It reviews and scrutinises the decisions 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 2020 the Panel elected Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham) as Chair and Cllr Suky Samra (Walsall) as Vice Chair for the 2020/21 Municipal Year.
- 4.3 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Maria Crompton and Cllr Farut Shaeen. Cllr Richard Jones is named substitute.
- 4.4 Meeting papers, meeting dates, published reports, together with more information about the Panel can be found on the Panel's website: www.westmidlandspcp.co.uk. All 2020/21 meetings have been held virtually and 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. (This task is delegated to the Birmingham Monitoring Officer).
- 6.2 The Panel's work programme consists of statutory tasks (listed above) and wider exploratory work to build knowledge and insight into the strategic policing landscape in order to hold the PCC to account.
- 6.3 The PCC attends every Panel meeting to respond to questions and provides updates on recent activities. The Panel may also invite the Chief Constable to attend to answer any questions which appear to the Panel to be necessary to carry out its functions. The Panel may also invite other persons (residents, stakeholders, councillors, officers from other parts of the public sector) to discuss issues of local concern and/or answer questions.

7 Highlights September 2020 – March 2021

- 7.1 **September 2020:** The Panel reviewed the PCC's draft Annual Report and made suggestions for inclusion in the final version. Members discussed in detail the reported decline in overall public confidence in West Midlands Police. The Panel has sought additional information to fully understand the data collected against the measure of public confidence to inform a Panel inquiry into the reasons for this decline and actions that can be taken to address this. Members also considered its annual monitoring reports on complaint handling and the Panel budget and expenditure of its Home Office grant.
- 7.2 **November 2020:** The Panel invited the Director of the Violence Reduction Unit to provide an update on its work and collaboration with the PCC and other partners.
- 7.3 **January 2021:** The PCC set out his preliminary revenue budget and capital programme.

- 7.4 **February 2021** - The Panel reviewed and approved the PCC's proposed policing precept and budget for 2021/22. It also recommended the PCC expand the public budget consultation exercise and work with the Panel on the format of future budget reports. The Panel letter and PCC's response are available <http://westmidlandspcp.co.uk/publications/>
- 7.5 **March 2021:** The Panel will receive updates on police recruitment and the Estates Strategy. There will be an introduction to the joint WMP/ OPCC Fairness and Belonging Plan – a programme of work to ensure WMP is an inclusive, diverse and fair an organisation as possible. The PCC will also present his end of term report.
- 7.6 Panel meetings have also provided members with the opportunity to put questions to the PCC on a number of policing and crime issues including the response to COVID-19 pandemic, support for victims of domestic violence, the police response to breaches of the Covid regulations and Hate Crime recording. Members have also sought progress updates on the Estates Strategy, the National Uplift Programme for recruiting front-line police officers and recruitment activity to boost the diversity of the force.

8 Scrutiny Inquiry into Public Confidence in the Police

- 8.1 The Panel agreed to undertake an inquiry into public confidence in the police with the aim to understand why reported public confidence had fallen, what factors had an impact and what the PCC could do to address these issues.
- 8.2 In November Panel members met the Head of Force Contact to discuss trends in demand for the 101-call service, live chat facility and other channels of communication for the public, the triage of calls, levels of abandoned calls and resourcing of the call centre.
- 8.3 Between March and May, the Panel will focus on collecting insights and perspectives from resident groups, community groups and local stakeholder organisations. All Panel members have been asked to identify suitable groups that could be surveyed.
- 8.4 The Panel's report and recommendations will be presented to the new PCC to consider when developing their Police and Crime Plan.

9 Looking Ahead to 2021/22

- 9.1 Following the election of the new PCC in May 2021 one of the Panel's first tasks will be to review the new Police and Crime Plan issued by the PCC ensuring it reflects the priorities of residents.
- 9.2 As the Panel shapes its work programme for the 2021/2022 Municipal Year to assess the impact, actions and decisions of the PCC there are opportunities for further dialogue and closer working with local scrutiny committees.
- 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

Contact officer:

Sarah Fradgley, Panel Officer, Email: wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk Tel: 0121 303 1727