

**Minutes of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities
Scrutiny Board**

**23rd November 2017 at 5.00pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Edis (Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Ashman and Phillips.

Apologies: Councillors Hevican, R Price, Underhill and White.

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Baker (Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board);
L Hill (West Bromwich Business Improvement District);
Sergeant Westwood (West Midlands Police);
Alan Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities).

6/17

Discussion with Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board

The Chair of the Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board, Chief Superintendent Baker of West Midlands Police, attended the meeting and provided an update on that Board, its sub-groups and the recent peer review that had been carried out.

The Safer Sandwell Partnership Police and Crime Board was comprised of senior representatives from a wide range of partners including the Police, Fire Service, the Council, Probation and Health organisations as well as representatives of the third sector, education, elected members and members of the community. The Board worked to reduce crime and reoffending in Sandwell.

The Police and Crime Board had six sub-groups:-

- Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP);
- Community Safety Planning Group (CSPG);
- Sandwell Drug & Alcohol Partnership (SDAP);
- CONTEST Board;
- Integrated Offender Management Board;
- Youth Offending Service Board.

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Each of these sub-groups had specific areas of responsibility and focus and were comprised of representatives of the key partners. The Youth Offending Service Board was statutory and focussed on young people up to the age of 18, or in certain circumstances to the age of 24.

The peer review had been commissioned and undertaken to ensure alignment with the Vision 2030 and West Midlands Police priorities as well to ensure the work of the Board was robust on violence prevention and adverse childhood experiences. The review included a full consultation exercise with partners and stakeholders. Feedback from the review had indicated that while the Board was delivering effectively on its aims, a refocussing of efforts could be beneficial.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The Safer Sandwell Partnership was holding a workshop in January 2018, which would be considering modern slavery, which included labour exploitation, sex exploitation and domestic servitude.
- There was a multi-agency group, chaired by the Council, that was looking at exploitation and modern slavery. Sandwell was one of the most proactive areas in the West Midlands on this issue, but it was recognised that there was still more work to be done.
- The Cabinet had recently agreed a Modern Slavery Statement and Policy.
- Labour exploitation was considered the largest type of modern slavery and awareness raising across the partnership, including the third sector and communities, was taking place.
- West Midlands Police had undertaken a restructure, with further savings being made through increasing effectiveness and efficiency measures.
- Nationally there had been an increase in crime, and this was reflected locally. Anecdotal evidence suggested that in areas that had switched to Universal Credit, there had been upturns in thefts of petrol and from shops.

The Board thanked Chief Superintendent Baker for attending the meeting.

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Resolved that an update on the response to modern slavery in Sandwell be included in the work programme for Scrutiny.

7/17

Public Space Protection Orders

The Board received an update on Public Space Protection Orders (known as PSPOs) in Sandwell from the Director – Housing and Communities. A representative of West Bromwich Business Improvement District (BID) and the Police Sergeant for West Bromwich Town Centre also attended the meeting to contribute to the discussion.

PSPOs had been previously discussed for introduction in Sandwell, particularly in West Bromwich Town Centre, but had not come to fruition. The Director advised the Board that resolving this issue was a priority and that he would be seeking a positive working relationship with the West Bromwich BID, the Police and other stakeholders.

The representative of the West Bromwich BID and the Police Sergeant addressed the meeting to share their concerns about levels of anti-social behaviour and crime in the town centre.

From the comments and questions by members of the Scrutiny Board the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- There was a strict process that had to be followed to introduce a PSPO in an area. This included a statutory consultation period with a wide range of groups and individuals including the Chief Constable, the Police and Crime Commissioner, local businesses and the public in the area covered by the proposed PSPO.
- It was vital to get agreement on the area to be covered by a PSPO and this would need to be done collaboratively with key stakeholders.
- The BID was working closely with the Police to try to resolve issues in West Bromwich town centre and welcomed the Council's support.

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- The Police were able to use various powers to address issues around gangs including behaviour contracts.
- PSPOs could have a deterrent effect, reducing instances of anti-social behaviour and crime within the areas covered by such orders.
- It was felt that CCTV could help deter crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly through dome cameras which were possible to control better, reducing camera blackspots. It was noted that there were various CCTV systems in West Bromwich town centre, but due to being in different ownership they were not linked together.
- All of the shopping centres within West Bromwich town centre were on the Shop Link radio system, allowing easy communication between businesses and the local police to help stop shoplifters or other security and crime issues.
- While a PSPO was likely to be beneficial for West Bromwich town centre, it was not the only way that the Council and the Police could address the issues affecting the town. A more co-ordinated approach, deploying resources based on intelligence and proactive ways of working would be needed to address the concerns of local businesses and visitors to the town centre.

Members thanked the attendees for contributing to the discussion and welcomed the intention to strengthen working relationships between the Council, Police and West Bromwich BID.

Resolved that an update on the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order in West Bromwich Town Centre be included in the work programme for Scrutiny.

(Meeting ended at 6.07pm)

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