

Report to: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Date: 12 October 2021

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Update September 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 Cllr Rajbir Singh. Cllr Farut Shaeen and Cllr Richard Jones are named substitute members.
- 1.2 This report reflects on the work of the Panel between March 2021 and September 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 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 2021 the Panel elected Councillor Suky Samra (Walsall MBC) as Chair and Kristina Murphy (Independent Co-opted Member) as Vice Chair for the 2021/22 Municipal Year.
- 4.3 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Rajbir Singh. Cllr Farut Shaeen and Cllr Richard Jones are named substitute members.

5 Meetings and agenda papers

- 5.1 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 were held virtually and live streamed.

- 5.2 In May 2021, the regulations allowing remote police and crime panel meetings expired and all formal meetings had to be held face to face. The Panel agreed to a flexible approach with a combination of formal in-person meetings when conducting statutory tasks (see paragraph 7) and other matters requiring a formal decision, combined with informal virtual meetings for discussion items.
- 5.3 To ensure full transparency virtual meetings are webcast for public viewing and papers published on the panel website.

6 Panel Resources and Officer Support

- 6.1 The Panel continues to operate within the limits of the Home Office Grant. The Panel agreed in 2012 that Members would not use this to draw special responsibility allowances, but travel and carer expenses can be claimed.
- 6.2 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.

7 Core Work Programme –Statutory Tasks

- 7.1 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).
- 7.2 The Panel's work programme consists of statutory tasks (listed above) and wider exploratory work to build knowledge and insight into the strategic policing and the wider community safety and criminal justice landscape in order to hold the PCC to account.
- 7.3 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.

8 Highlights March 2021 – September 2021

- 8.1 **March 2021:** David Jamieson presented his end of term report and members reflected on the progress towards his Police and Crime Plan priorities. The Panel also received an update on the National Uplift Programme for recruiting front-line police officers and local recruitment activity to boost the diversity of the force. Members sought reassurance on retention and progression of new officers. Members also welcomed the joint WMP/ OPCC Fairness and Belonging Programme to refresh the Force's approach to diversity and inclusion.

8.2 **June 2021:** The annual appointment process of panel members resulted in a 60% turnover of councillor panel members. The panel secretariat delivered an induction workshop with Frontline Consulting Ltd for all members that examined the role of the Panel, and the tools and information required to hold the PCC to account. A further member briefing on police finance was held in September.

8.3 **July 2021** – The Panel formally met Simon Foster West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner. He shared with the Panel his aspirations and his approach to developing his Police and Crime Plan. Panel members welcomed the PCC’s offer of facilitating visits to develop knowledge of different policing services, the police estate and the use of mobile technology.

9 **Scrutiny Inquiry into Public Confidence in the Police**

9.1 In 2020/21 The Panel began an in-depth inquiry into public confidence in the police with the aim to understand why reported public confidence in West Midlands Police had fallen from 71% in March 2019 to 65% in March 2020. Given the PCC’s commitment to increase public confidence in the police, the Panel was keen to examine the factors that had an impact and what the PCC could do to address these issues.

9.2 Between March and May, the Panel collected insights and perspectives from resident groups, community groups and local stakeholder organisations.

9.3 The Panel’s report and recommendations are currently being developed with panel members and findings will be presented to the new PCC to consider in October.

10 **Looking Ahead**

10.1 In October 2021 the Panel will review the new Police and Crime Plan issued by the PCC. Panel members will examine whether the plan reflects the priorities of residents.

10.2 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.

10.3 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