

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Update March 2024

Sandwell Metropolitan District Council

Date: March 2024

Report of the Panel Lead Officer: Kevin O' Keefe Chief Executive Dudley MBC

1 Purpose

- 1.1 Bi-annual reports on the activities of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel are presented to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council for consideration. This report reflects on the work of the Panel between November 2023 and February 2024.
- 1.2 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Cllr Syeda Khatun. Cllr Mohammed Jalal Uddin and Cllr Vicki Smith are named substitute members.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the information contained in the report be noted.

3 Role of the Police and Crime Panel

- 3.1 The Panel is a joint scrutiny body of the West Midland authorities with a dual role to 'support and challenge' the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
- 3.2 The Panel acts as a critical friend to the PCC on behalf of West Midlands residents and must perform the following statutory functions:
 - Review and comment on the PCC's draft Police and Crime Plan.
 - Review the PCC's Annual Reports.
 - Scrutinise decisions and actions of the PCC.
 - Review (with the power to veto) the PCC's proposed Council Tax precept.
 - Hold confirmation hearings before the PCC makes certain senior appointments (Chief Constable, Deputy PCC, Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer), with the power to veto the Chief Constable appointment.
 - Handle non-criminal complaints about the conduct of the PCC and Deputy PCC, referring serious complaints to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (task delegated to the Birmingham Monitoring Officer).
 - Appoint an acting PCC if required.
 - Suspend the PCC if charged.
- 3.3 The Panel's work programme consists of statutory tasks (listed above) and wider exploratory work to build knowledge and insight into the strategic policing,

community safety and criminal justice landscape to fulfil its role to hold the PCC to account.

- 3.4 The Panel must maintain a strategic focus when scrutinising the work of the PCC, rather than operational detail.
- 3.5 Proposed changes to police governance arrangements whereby the PCC functions transfer to the WM Mayor are subject to ongoing legal and parliamentary processes. However, the Police and Crime Panel would continue to perform its statutory functions irrespective of any police governance changes.

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 and are appointed annually. Named substitutes are appointed for each councillor member. Three independent members also serve on the Panel.
- 4.2 The Panel elected Councillor Jasbir Jaspal (City of Wolverhampton) as Chair and Kristina Murphy (Independent Co-opted Member) as Vice Chair for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year.

5 Meetings and agenda papers

- 5.1 The Panel meets approximately six times a year at venues across the region. Meeting papers, meeting dates, published reports, together with more information about the Panel can be found on the [Panel's website: www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk](http://www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk). Meetings are livestreamed for the public. Links to web streams are published on our website alongside the meeting papers.

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 councillor members would not use this to draw special responsibility allowances, but travel and carer expenses can be claimed.
- 6.2 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's Chief Executive provides lead officer support. Birmingham City Council acts as secretariat and provides legal support. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council supports the Panel with its scrutiny of the PCC budget and precept.

7 Key activities by the Police and Crime Panel (November 2023-March 2024)

- 7.1 **November 2023:** The Panel fulfilled its statutory duties in reviewing the Commissioner's **Annual Report** and scrutinising the PCC on his reported progress against his Police and Crime Plan objectives. [The Panel published a report with recommendations for the PCC](#) to consider for improving the content of the report for the public.

- 7.2 **December 2023:** The Panel reacted to the publication of the His Majesty's Inspector for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (**HMICFRS**) '**notice of concern**' that placed West Midlands Police in Engage Status of enhanced monitoring. An extraordinary panel meeting was called to seek assurance from the PCC on actions planned to address the HMICFRS findings and his oversight of improvements made by the Force. To inform this work and understand the context of the inspection findings, Panel members received an information briefing from the HMICFRS on its inspection regime.
- 7.3 **January 2024:** Scrutiny of the PCC's oversight of the performance of West Midlands Police continued. The Panel discussed recently published 2022/2023 full **HMICFRS PEEL Inspection** report of West Midlands Police. The Panel also scrutinised the PCC's police and crime plan commitments to tackle **drugs** and learnt about the diversionary and prevention work to address the underlying causes of substance misuse that is a key driver of acquisitive crime.
- 7.4 **February 2024:** The Panel invited the Chief Constable to provide ongoing reassurances on actions to address the four areas of concern raised by HMICFRS and the wider recommendations in the PEEL Inspection Report. The Panel has programmed further updates. The Panel also conducted its formal review of the Commissioner's proposed **policing precept** for 2024/25. To understand the context of the proposals, the Panel also examined the Commissioner's proposed budget, capital programme and reserve's policy. Following the meeting, [the Panel published its report and recommendation to the PCC.](#)
- 7.5 In February, Panel members have continued to undertake **training** to support their roles as well improving core knowledge on policing functions. During January and February all panel members were invited to a training session on police finance. A second briefing session was facilitated by the Panel secretariat to prepare members for conducting the review of the precept.
- 7.6 The Police and Crime Panel meets again on 18 March 2024.

8 Public Questions

- 8.1 The Panel has not received any public questions during this reporting period. Anyone who lives, works or studies in the West Midlands can ask a question relating to the Panel's role in scrutinising the PCC. Questions should be submitted in writing to the Panel Officer. More details can be found on the [West Midlands Police and Crime Panel getting involved webpage.](#)

9 Forward Plan

- 9.1 In May district councils will appoint panel members for the 2024/25 Municipal Year. Members will then shape its work programme for the coming year to assess the impact, actions and decisions of the PCC. Panel members are encouraged

to develop dialogue with local scrutiny committees on policing, community safety and criminal justice to feed into the panel work programming process.

10 Finance Implications

10.1 There are no direct finance implications associated with this update report. The cost administration of the Panel is met by a ringfenced Home Office grant.

11 Legal Implications

11.1 A Police and Crime Panel must be maintained to carry out scrutiny functions and responsibilities as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. The Panel membership must represent all the districts and reflect the political composition of the region.

12 Equalities Implications

12.1 This Police and Crime Panel is a joint committee of West Midlands Local Authorities. Therefore, it has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

12.2 The Panel considers these duties during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. Including how policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; whether impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within the West Midlands; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.

12.3 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

13 Background Papers

13.1 [WMPCP agenda and minutes November 2023 - February 2024](#)

13.2 [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#)

14 Contact officers:

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