

## **West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Update October 2023**

### **Sandwell Metropolitan District Council**

**Date: October 2023**

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 May and October 2023.
- 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

and the wider 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.

#### **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 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.

#### **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 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 activity by the Police and Crime Panel**

- 7.1 May 2023: The annual appointment process of councillor panel members was managed through the district AGMs in May. This saw a 50% turnover of councillor panel members.
- 7.2 June 2023: All panel members and named substitute members participated in induction **training**. The session focussed on the role and responsibilities of the PCC and the Panel, developing an effective work programme, and scrutiny of performance information.
- 7.3 July 2023: The Panel conducted a **Confirmation Hearing** for the new Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel has a key role in the appointment process of senior positions and must hold a public hearing to question the preferred candidate to assess their suitability. The

PCC must then have regard to the Panel's recommendation. The Panel recommended the PCC appoint his preferred candidate.

- 7.4 September 2023: The Panel examined the delivery of **Police and Crime Plan objectives to improve road safety** for all users and how the PCC was holding the Chief Constable to account on action undertaken by WMP, as well as his partnership work with Local Authorities. The Panel called for improved communication with local communities and councillors about the range of initiatives, and supported the PCC's campaign seeking to retain speeding fix penalty fines locally to be invested in new road safety projects.
- 7.5 The Panel also welcomed a **public question** at the meeting about scrutiny of the PCC's Police and Crime Plan objective to maintain **PCSOs numbers** and as a result of this question has sought further information about PCSO capacity and staff morale.
- 7.6 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](#).
- 7.7 Panel members have continued to undertake **training** to support them in their role and improving core knowledge on policing functions, for example call handling and neighbourhood policing.
- 7.8 In September 2023, members visited Lloyd House Police Head Quarters where the PCC provided an outline of his role and responsibilities and the Chief Constable explained the **new police operational model** and responded to questions. Members also received briefings on performance monitoring and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner work on **tackling Drug Harm**. This was followed by a tour of the **WMP Force Contact Centre**.

## **8 Forward Plan**

- 8.1 In November the Panel will review the PCC's Annual Report that sets out progress made towards his Police and Crime Plan objectives. In January, the Panel will scrutinise the Commissioner's budget proposals and proposed policing precept ahead of formally reviewing the policing precept for 2023-24 at its 5 February meeting.
- 8.2 As the Panel shapes its work programme for the 2023/24 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 Finance Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct finance implications associated with this update report.

## **10 Legal Implications**

- 10.1 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.

## **11 Equalities Implications**

- 11.1 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:
- 11.1.1 Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
  - 11.1.2 Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - 11.1.3 Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 11.2 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 Background Papers**

- 12.1 West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Minutes and Agenda:  
[www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk](http://www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk)

## **13 Contact officers:**

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

Overview and Scrutiny Manager (Birmingham City Council): Sarah Fradgley  
(0121 303 1727)