

Report to Council

18 March 2025

Subject:	West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Update – March 2025
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the information contained in the report providing an update on West Midlands Police and Crime Panel activities since November 2024 be noted.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 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 2024 and February 2025.
- 2.2 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Councillor Jackie Taylor and Councillor Bill Gavan MBE. Councillor Maria Crompton is appointed as named substitute member.

3 Context and Key Issues

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 scrutinising operational detail.

Panel Membership

- 3.5 The Panel consists of 12 councillors appointed annually representing the 7 West Midland districts. Membership must reflect the political balance of the region. Named substitutes are appointed for each councillor member. Three independent members also serve on the Panel.

- 3.6 Sandwell is represented on the Panel by Councillor Jackie Taylor and Councillor Bill Gavan MBE. Councillor Maria Crompton is appointed as named substitute member.
- 3.7 The Panel elected Councillor Jasbir Jaspal (City of Wolverhampton) as Chair and Kristina Murphy (Independent Co-opted Member) as Vice Chair for the 2024/2025 Municipal Year.

Meetings and agenda papers

- 3.8 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 Meetings are livestreamed for the public. Links to web streams are published on the Panel's website alongside the meeting papers.

Panel Resources and Officer Support

- 3.9 The Panel operates 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.
- 3.10 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's Chief Executive provides lead officer support. Birmingham City Council acts as secretariat and provides legal support.

Key activities by the Police and Crime Panel (November 2024 - February 2025)

- 3.11 **In November 2024** Members were invited to a site visit of the West Midlands Police C3 Contact Centre and Firearms Unit in Aston, Birmingham. This included a tour of the call handling operations as well as the firearm storage. The visit included talks from senior officers and the Commissioner on the PCC responsibilities, the operation of the Contact Centre, as well as future developments in neighbourhood policing.

- 3.12 **In December 2024** the Panel considered an update on the recent activities and key decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Medium-term Financial Plan and Reserves Strategy and the work of the Panel's Use of Information Sub-Group.

The Panel also conducted a Confirmation Hearing for the reappointment of Mr Guildford as Chief Constable. As part of the Confirmation Hearing, Members heard from the Commissioner on the process for reappointment and the suitability of Mr Guildford to continue in the role, Panel Members put a series of questions to the Mr Guildford to assess his professional competence and independence for the role. Following this, the Panel endorsed the PCC's preferred candidate, and Mr Guildford was confirmed as the Chief Constable.

- 3.13 **In January 2025** the Panel fulfilled its statutory function of reviewing the PCC's Draft Police and Crime Plan. This was a statutory role that the Panel must undertake following the election of a new Police and Crime Commissioner. The Plan sets out the PCC's priorities during their term of office that would run from 2025 to 2029.

The Panel was satisfied that the Plan reflected current priorities across the West Midlands and would support the continuation of the existing work by West Midlands Police and partner organisations to reduce crime and improve community safety. The Panel recognised the research that had gone into the development of the Plan including the public consultation exercise. The Panel made a series of recommendations that asked the PCC to consider including more clarity on ambitions and include specific targets where appropriate or explain how statistically significant changes would be measured, consider establishing a mechanism to monitor the performance of Live Chat, and expand the Plan to include specific reference to tackling graffiti, vandalism and low-level criminal damage. The Panel report is published on the website, and the PCC's formal response is expected soon.

- 3.14 **In January 2025** the Panel also reviewed the work of the Commissioner and the West Midlands Police in identifying any lessons learnt from the violent disorder that had taken place in the Summer of 2024. This explored the work to ensure residents of West Midlands were safe, working with partners on community cohesion and collaborating with other police forces to ensure that there was an adequate police

response in the region and nationally to address any future disorder across the country.

- 3.15 **In February 2025** the Panel reviewed the proposed Policing Precept for the 2025/26 financial year and considered the PCC revenue budget and capital programme, The Panel endorsed the proposed precept of £229.50 for a Band D property.
- 3.16 As part of the preparation for the scrutiny of the proposed Policing Precept for 2025/26, Members received two briefings. The first took place in January 2025 and it focussed on how the police funding was distributed and broken down across the force. The second took place in February 2025 and this focussed on how Members could scrutinise the budget and precept proposals.
- 3.17 Also in February 2025, Members reviewed the Annual Report of the PCC. This was a yearly function of the Panel to comment on the work of the PCC over the year. This draft report covered the 2023/24 period. Members commented on the report and provided a response to the PCC.
- 3.18 Members also appointed two new Independent Panel Members during this period. Independent Members provide impartial perspectives to the Panel and often bring further expertise to support the work of the Panel. One Independent Member will start in March 2025 and the other will start in June 2025. The Panel want to thank the work of the Independent Panel Members for their perspective and insight into the matters that are being scrutinised. A region-wide recruitment campaign included advertising across the West Midlands through social media campaigns, WM Jobs advertising and speaking with various organisations to promote the roles and the work of the Panel. Formal interviews were then conducted by a subgroup of Panel Members.

Forward Plan

- 3.19 The Panel next meets in March which is the last formal meeting of the municipal year. Members will continue to shape its work programme to enable it to assess the impact, actions, and decisions of the PCC for the next municipal year. Panel Officers will be approaching all districts to nominate their next cohort of Panel Members.

3.20 All Panel members are encouraged to develop dialogue with their local scrutiny committees on policing, community safety and criminal justice to feed into the panel work programming process.

4 Alternative Options

4.1 There are no alternative options arising from this report. This report is for noting and provides information on the work of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel, hence there is no need to present any alternative options.

5 Implications

Resources:	There are no direct financial implications associated with this update report. The administration costs of the Panel are met by a ringfenced Home Office grant. The Panel is administered by Birmingham City Council the appointed Host Authority.
Legal and Governance:	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.
Risk:	There are no identified risks associated with the recommendation in this report. Under the Home Office Grant Agreement, the West Midlands must maintain a panel to fulfil its statutory responsibilities, meeting in public and making necessary reports on PCCs' decisions and actions. To mitigate risk, annual inductions are provided to members, and the Panel sets an annual programme of public meetings and maintains a work programme that provides for scrutiny and challenge of the PCC.
Equality:	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>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.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	The Police and Crime Panel scrutinises and challenges the decisions and activities of the PCC in fulfilling the objectives of the West Midlands police and crime plan. Policing, community safety and criminal justice have implications for the wellbeing of residents.
Social Value:	Not applicable
Climate Change:	Not applicable
Corporate Parenting:	Not applicable

6. Appendices

None.

7. Background Papers

WMPCP agenda and minutes published on www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk

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

