

## **West Midlands Police and Crime Panel**

### **Report of the Panel Scrutiny of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Arrangement for Community Safety Grants**

*23 November 2015, 2pm, Diamond Rooms – Coventry Council House*

## **A The Inquiry**

- A.1 In October 2015, the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel (WMPCP) agreed to undertake a mini inquiry into the model for distributing community safety funding to seven Local Police and Crime Boards (LPCB) and possible alternative approaches.
- A.2 The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner ("the PCC") has asked the Panel for input into this work, to gather an understanding of the perspectives of the seven local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs); and to make recommendations for future schemes.

### ***Background***

- A.3 The 2015 Police and Crime Plan sets out the PCC's approach to community safety funding:  
With a population of nearly three million, the West Midlands is too large and diverse for centralised commissioning of community safety activity. Instead, community led Local Policing and Crime Boards in each local authority area develop local policing and crime plans and receive grants from the Commissioner to address local priorities.
- A.4 The Community Safety Fund (CSF) was transferred from the Home Office to Police and Crime Commissioners in 2013/14 in the form of a ring-fenced grant. In 2014/15, the CSF became part of the PCC's main Police Grant. On his election, the former PCC, Bob Jones undertook to distribute CSF to each of the seven Local Policing and Crime Boards (LPCB) and this has continued. Not all Police and Crime Commissioners do this, we understand.
- A.5 These arrangements, including the amount and division of funding, are based on historic patterns inherited from a previous, now abolished, community safety fund.
- A.6 The funding is used by the boards to undertake activities and projects to deliver against priorities in their local area. The 2015/16 grants totalled £6.969m, and were allocated as follows:
- Birmingham £2,497,583
  - Coventry £546,304
  - Dudley £396,364
  - Sandwell £530,190
  - Solihull £285,938

- Walsall £402,203
- Wolverhampton £492,495
- West Midlands Police £1,817,923.

A.7 The grants are allocated with few conditions or restrictions; the funding is not ring fenced but must be used for revenue purposes. The grant is provided for the purposes of achieving the priorities outlined in the Local Policing and Crime Plan, as agreed by the recipient. The recipient must consult, set and monitor these plans.<sup>1</sup>

A.8 A report setting out how the CSF was spent in 2014/15 was submitted to the Strategic Policing and Crime Board in July 2015.

### ***The Scope of the Inquiry***

A.9 The PCC has asked for these arrangements to be reviewed as he faces further grant reductions in the period up to 2020. Prior to the Comprehensive Spending Review on 25<sup>th</sup> November, Heads of Community Safety were informed that it is likely the CSF will be reduced by at least 25% in 2016/17, in line with expected cuts to the PCC's budget. Over the past three years, the CSF has been maintained at the same level, despite the 25% central government grant reduction to West Midlands Police since 2010.

A.10 However, this is about more than simply the amount. The Panel explored whether the current approach of dividing the pot between the seven authorities was the most efficient and most likely to secure real outcomes for people. Questions were also posed on the grant conditions and monitoring arrangements.

A.11 The PCC's Chief Finance Officer, in conjunction with other senior officers within his office, is undertaking a review of the returns completed by LPCB to determine the effectiveness of money spent on projects, and will report to the PCC separately.

### ***Attendees***

A.12 The following Panel members attended the session on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November: Cllr Ken Hawkins (Solihull – in the Chair); Cllr Mohammed Arif (Walsall – Substitute); Cllr Rose Burley (Walsall); Cllr Diane Holl-Allen (Solihull); Cllr Ann Lucas (Coventry); Cllr John O'Shea (Birmingham – Substitute); Cllr Paul Tilsley (Birmingham); Cllr Dave Tyler (Dudley); Nick Drew and Lionel Walker (Independent Members).

A.13 The following also attended the session:

- Dr Mashuq Ally, Head of Birmingham CSP
- Isabel Merrifield, Assistant Director Safeguarding, Performance and Quality, Coventry City Council
- Sue Hayward, Head of Dudley CSP
- Gary Bowman, Sandwell CSP

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, see Community Safety Fund – Grant conditions (2015-16) in the evidence pack

- Gill Crabbe, Head of Solihull CSP
- Lynne Hughes, Head of Walsall CSP and Adrian Rush, Head of Drug and Alcohol Service
- Karen Samuels, Head of Wolverhampton CSP

A.14 Later in the session, we were joined by the PCC, David Jamieson, and the Deputy PCC, Yvonne Mosquito, to discuss initial findings.

## B Findings

B.1 Following the receipt of written evidence<sup>2</sup> and the discussion at the session, seven key findings emerged. These are set out below.

### *Local Funding*

B.2 The PCC's decision to passport back the CSF to the Local Policing and Crime Boards (LPCB) for spend on local priorities was widely welcomed. The Heads of the CSPs explained to the Panel how priorities were identified through the annual strategic assessment. We were informed that the funding had enabled the delivery of both large pieces of work (including funding a domestic violence co-ordinator and supporting the fulfilment of statutory responsibilities around domestic homicide reviews) as well as smaller, more localised, schemes (such as supporting a speed watch scheme).

*We have welcomed the passporting back of the Community Safety Fund to Local Authority areas. This has given us the opportunity to commission and purchase services/projects/infrastructure in line with our Local Police and Crime Plan and Community Safety Partnership Priorities. (Dudley)*

*The PCC provides funding which enables vital local work to continue in Sandwell. This includes work to prevent and tackle domestic abuse and support victims, prevention and support for problem drinkers, and work to prevent and deter offending. Projects are successful and loss of funding would have very serious consequences. (Sandwell)*

B.3 It was emphasised that it is often critical to have local trusted credible providers providing required interventions, for example around working with gangs.

*It is not always appropriate for a provider from a different agency from another area to start delivering when there are established partnerships already in place and working well. In some instances, this practice can be dangerous – i.e. gangs work needs to be undertaken by local established and trusted community organisations who have the credibility to deliver within gang-affected areas. (Wolverhampton)*

B.4 The importance of being able to reflect local priorities reflects comments that the Panel have made in the past: for example when considering the PCC's Police and Crime Plan in February 2015, the Panel commented on the fact that alcohol related crimes had been raised as a priority in a number of Local Policing Plans yet not included within the PCC's plan.

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<sup>2</sup> Quotes in this report are taken from the written submissions

## Grant Conditions

- B.5 There was general agreement that the conditions attached to the grant were about right: that there was enough autonomy to allow CSPs to ensure that local priorities are met, whilst aligning with the Police and Crime Plan.

## Simplified Monitoring

- B.6 However, there was a clear call from the CSPs for simplified monitoring. The requirements for quarterly monitoring seemed onerous and it was felt by some that the process as a whole could be streamlined, particularly where smaller amounts of money were concerned.

*.. [there is] a disproportionate amount of bureaucracy and monitoring on the community safety team, and consequently on partners who are required to contribute to the report; there is often little or no variation in outcomes over a three month period to warrant sending in reports on such a frequent basis. (Wolverhampton)*

*We suggest a lighter touch to monitoring may be sensible but with a greater focus on contribution to outcomes. Is quarterly monitoring really necessary to determine successful outcomes or does it lead to counting outputs and reporting of activity. (Sandwell)*

*One option which may assist would be to reduce the bureaucratic requirements below a threshold level, for example less than £20,000 within one financial year. (Birmingham)*

*However, it would help to have some flexibility e.g. where projects or work with a small financial value are "commissioned" to have less frequent reporting than quarterly. (Dudley)*

*... it is more burdensome than similar grant based schemes run by the council and could be reduced and simplified to an annual process of agreement of activity and outcomes and reporting of activity and outcomes each March /April. (Sandwell)*

- B.7 It was noted that separate funding streams from the PCC have different requirements, and that it would help if these were included in one model:

*We would suggest that establishing separate funding streams e.g. Victims Commission is unhelpful as it creates extra work for both CSP PCBs and for the PCCs office. Even if some of the funds are centrally determined, the allocation and monitoring arrangements would be better included in one overall funding model rather than managed through in separate processes. (Sandwell)*

- B.8 It was also recognised that this is public money so has to be accounted for, and it was also emphasised that there is a need to demonstrate that good outcomes are being achieved.

*CSPs are utilising public money so this is an area with little flexibility. Also, in a climate of reduced budgets there is much emphasis on seeking confidence that good outcomes are being achieved from each and every pound spent. (Birmingham)*

- B.9 There was general agreement that accountability could be strengthened in line with a more outcomes based approach; one suggestion was for a robust performance framework to measure the impact of interventions.

- B.10 This would also help avoid duplications in resources, and no double counting of outcomes (remembering that some organisations receive funding from elsewhere too).

- B.11 The PCC responded that he thought the requirements were already light, but undertook to look again at the process to see if further streamlining could be achieved. He noted that the quarterly monitoring gives the PCC's office an opportunity to see how spending was going over the year, and had been introduced following significant underspends. There is a need to maintain accountability of funding but also to reduce burdens where possible.

### ***In-Year Changes***

- B.12 Some of the Heads of CSPs raised the issue of making changes to spending in year. A costed plan has to be agreed at the start of the year and this limits scope to vary delivery through the year following any changes in the delivery landscape. Any changes have to be agreed with the PCC's office, which restricted the CSPs' ability to respond to issues that cropped up during the year. The request was to be able to allow virements between activities as long as it met the priorities of the Police and Crime Plan.

*As long as delivery is in line with agreed strategic priorities for the LPCB or identified underspend part way through the year used to support other aspects of the agreed plan, and is reflected in reporting to the PCC, this should be allowed. (Wolverhampton)*

### ***The Amount of Funding***

- B.13 Whilst there would rarely be enough funding to do all that needed to be done, it was recognised that resources were limited.

*A key role for CSP's is managing the constant demand for funding for all manner of activities and interventions. There will always be need which has to be managed. (Birmingham)*

- B.14 The proposed reduction of CSF grant by 25% was discussed, and there was concern about the impact of that reduction. Whilst this would be achievable with some further discussion of priorities, there would be less scope for new projects and existing support would reduce.

*In the course of Board discussions it is clear that no funding reductions of the order of 25% will be achieved without implications for services provided and communities and individuals supported. In most cases the reduction is being achieved by reducing existing support and not replacing some one-off spend. However, this does mean that there will be less option for new projects and initiatives to be funded in future as they emerge. The scope for developing new responses to issues will be reduced. Any further funding reductions in subsequent years may start to impact on the viability of some projects and activity which would need to be considered separately. (Coventry)*

- B.15 Part of the issue is the reduction in resources to manage the money that most of the CSPs have experienced. Many noted that they had had to make changes in line with local authority cuts, with further reductions expected. Another said that the cuts had required them to deliver services differently to generate the savings.

- B.16 A final point was made about the need to manage any future reductions or changes, particularly where third sector providers are involved:

*If arrangements do change we would ask that there is a lead in time and that arrangements are robust and understood by all concerned. We would also need to arrange exit strategies for post holders and services. (Dudley)*

## ***Length of Funding Term***

- B.17 The CSF funding is allocated on an annual basis, which means that long term planning is challenging. It makes it difficult to use the funding to complement other commissioned services. For example, in Walsall there is a project to track offenders (whose offences relate to drugs and alcohol) through the criminal justice system. Those services all complement public health commissioned treatment services, which are commissioned on a three year basis.

*In order to get best use of the money it would be helpful to have longer term funding rather than yearly allocations. This would enable effective commissioning of services. (Dudley)*

- B.18 This issue is exacerbated by the fact that any carry-over of funds must be agreed by the PCC. There was a request for this to be reconsidered.
- B.19 It is also difficult when employing staff with the money, as each year there is uncertainty as to the funding, which means that those staff are often having to think about other employment options as early as November.
- B.20 The PCC did acknowledge this issue, but pointed out that his budget allocation was on an annual basis, so had limited room to change this.

## ***Alternative Approaches***

- B.21 In the main there was no great demand for a radical change to how the CSF fund is allocated.
- B.22 Generally there was support for the funding allocation on the basis of population, as a way to achieve fairness and firm support for a locally based approach. However, the details of the formula used to allocate funds to each of the seven districts were not clear, and should be made transparent.
- B.23 There was some support for a regional approach for those areas of work which lend themselves to such an approach, for example joint work on tackling child sexual exploitation. Commissioning on regional impact would remove some of the 'postcode lottery' element. However, CSP's should retain the facility to respond to local pressures and issues.

*There is an argument that using a crime profile for the region might present a different case. For serious crime issues such as Organised Criminal Groups (CSE, trafficking drugs etc.) the funding allocations could be organised to support regional-level activity. For the more localised issues, such as burglary hot spots and night-time economy hotspots, then the current funding model is a proven process (Birmingham)*

*Maximise the local ownership of the outcomes required and agree activity from a menu of regional priorities so that both regional and local priorities can be met and outcomes measured. Give greater autonomy and responsibility to local CSPs/PCBs for local management, delivery and outcomes. (Sandwell)*

B.24 However, there was no support for combining the pot and using a wholly commissioning approach, perhaps by theme. The local ownership and control of community safety issues was felt to be vital to delivering successful outcomes. A broad commissioning approach:

*...would undermine the CSP's efforts to coordinate local delivery and avoid duplication of local delivery which is currently in place. It would open up unnecessary competition across providers which are, at present, open to collaborative working. (Wolverhampton)*

*A bidding arrangement could also have flaws e.g. smaller organisations bidding for funding, who may be able to deliver good outcomes but do not have the capacity to complete bids if timescales are short; it is time consuming and subjective. (Dudley)*

*Certainly ... bidding [does not seem right], it is both time consuming and subjective. A broader approach feels too loose and not sufficiently outcomes focused. (Sandwell)*

B.25 Nonetheless, it was recognised that there is more scope for CSPs to work more closely across boundaries. This already happens in some areas:

*We are already exploring joint commissioning options with local commissioning partners; there is more scope to identify these opportunities across the local authority area than across local authority boundaries – e.g. delivery against the Violence Against Women & Girls strategy. (Wolverhampton)*

*Yes, especially in areas where a multi CSP approach is most effective, e.g. PREVENT, Data Management, DHRs. They should remain independent through to enable response to local priorities that do vary both within and between CSP areas. e.g. PREVENT co-ordinators in the 4 Black Country CSPs are already working together. (Sandwell)*

B.26 It was proposed during the meeting that CSPs could use their regular meetings of CSP Heads to take this forward. These meetings already provide a useful forum:

*This allows us to address any difficulties around communication and to understand the changing landscape within which the PCC operates. It is effective use of the CSF in Wolverhampton that enables us to deliver good outcomes for local residents (Wolverhampton)*

*These various channels permit CSPs to understand the PCC's priorities and consider them together with findings from community consultation, from Strategic Assessment findings and / or intelligence around emerging hotspots or issues. In this way good outcomes for the people of the West Midlands are secured (Birmingham)*

B.27 CSPs could develop some form of themed approach:

*An outline proposal may be to hold a half day conference (say, just before the summer holidays) and invite two or three CSP's to give a demonstration of a commissioned intervention which may champion a particular programme. Part of the demonstration would be a requirement to demonstrate how value for money is achieved. (Birmingham)*

B.28 It was also noted that a number of CSPs were undertaking a review or stocktake of recent activity and that there was scope to combine that work to see how closer working could help to ameliorate some of the budget cuts.



## C Conclusions and Recommendations

C.1 The Panel has set out a number of principles rather than recommendations for the PCC to consider, as his final decision depends on external factors such as the Comprehensive Spending Review (the impact of which still had to be determined at the time of writing). The Panel's intent was to examine the issues with a fresh set of eyes and set out some issues for the PCC to consider when making that final decision.

### ***Principle 1: Local funding is vital***

C.2 The Panel agreed that an element of local funding should be retained, and indeed was vital to maintaining close links to the community and responding to those local needs. The parameters already in place are appropriate (i.e. responsive to strategic assessments and aligned with the PCC's Plan). Moves to a wholly commissioned/themed approach would risk the local ownership of and responsibility for local priorities. It would also risk a more onerous process for obtaining funds.

### ***Principle 2: Simplified monitoring***

C.3 Whilst there was general agreement that the grant conditions were about right, the Panel did agree that the monitoring requirements should be looked at again. Whilst there is an argument for quarterly reporting of spend (to enable underspend to be identified at the earliest opportunity), the reporting of activity, outcomes and targets could be reported on a less frequent basis.

C.4 Notwithstanding the PCC's view that the requirements for monitoring are already light, the Panel agreed that the monitoring of funding at the lower end of spectrum should be as simple as possible, whilst of course retaining an oversight on what is being delivered. Transparency is critical and both the PCC and CSPs must be able to demonstrate to the public the outcomes achieved.

C.5 Therefore the Panel asks the PCC to consider the following:

- A review of the requirement for quarterly monitoring of activity, outcomes and targets, particularly where smaller projects are concerned;
- That all funding streams from the PCC's office are considered together (for example including those from the Victim's Commission), so that the same monitoring requirements and paperwork are required for each;
- That small in-year changes, such as viring underspend from one part of the agreed plan to another, that will be in line with already published plans, can take place with minimum bureaucracy and without requiring the authorisation from the PCC's office.

C.6 We also suggest that the PCC consider established good practice in project evaluation and monitoring, such as that set out by the National Audit Office in 2009.<sup>3</sup> Whilst this largely

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<sup>3</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20150921152225/http://www.nao.org.uk/intelligent-monitoring/>



refers to relationships with third sector partners, there are useful pointers to avoid excessive or unnecessarily burdensome monitoring requirements.

### ***Principle 3: Reductions in funding***

- C.7 At that meeting, members did express some reservations at the proposed 25% cut, but accepted that if the PCC's budget was being cut, then there was limited room for manoeuvre.
- C.8 Since that meeting, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has taken place and we are now aware that the expected national cuts to police budgets were not levied. However, the implications of this for West Midlands Police is not yet clear. Should there be no change to the WMP budget, we ask that CSF should remain unchanged also.
- C.9 If cuts to CSF are made, then the Panel asks that transition arrangements are carefully considered, to enable proper exit strategies to be put in place.

### ***Principle 4: Longer funding terms***

- C.10 Receiving the CSF on a one year basis makes long term planning difficult, and to use the funding to complement other commissioned services. The PCC explained that, whilst agreeing in principle that longer terms would be more beneficial, as his own funding was agreed on an annual basis it was difficult to do anything else.
- C.11 However, if there is scope to do so, a two or three year funding plan should be put in place.

### ***Principle 5: Opportunities for joint working***

- C.12 The final principle is addressed to the CSPs. The evidence we received did point to the scope for more joint working on common priorities. We welcome the suggestion made at the end of the session that CSPs undertake a joint stocktake and put forward proposals for closer working, including cross-boundary projects where appropriate.
- C.13 The Panel agreed that CSPs should settle this between themselves – rather than have it imposed.

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