

**MINUTES OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 25 MARCH 2019
14:00 HOURS, WALSALL**

PRESENT:-

Cllr Pervez Akhtar – Coventry
Cllr Paul Bradley - Dudley
Cllr Rose Burley – Walsall
Cllr Elaine Costigan - Sandwell
Cllr Ken Hawkins – Solihull - In the Chair
Cllr Abdul Khan – Coventry
Cllr Narinder Kooner – Birmingham
Cllr Suky Samra – Walsall

ALSO PRESENT:-

Ashley Bertie – Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner
Richard Costello – OPCC
Mark Kenyon – Chief Finance Officer, OPCC
Chief Superintendent Claire Bell – Head of West Midland Police Public Protection Unit
Tim Martin – WMCA Head of Governance
Jodie Townsend – WMCA Advisor
Emma Williamson – Lead Officer Head of Birmingham Scrutiny Services
Sarah Fradgley– Scrutiny Officer

APOLOGIES

- 453 Apologies for non-attendance were received from Cllr John O’Shea, Cllr Mike Bird, Kristina Murphy, Lionel Walker and Sarah Norman.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 454 Councillor Khan declared that he was a member of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Councillor Kooner declared that she worked for a community organisation that worked with the police.

MINUTES

- 455 The notes of the informal meeting held on 4 February 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 456 The Chair advised that no public questions had been submitted.

UPDATE ON THE WMCA PROPOSED TRANSFER OF PCC FUNCTIONS AND POWERS TO THE WEST MIDLAND MAYOR

- 457 The following report was submitted:-

(See document No. 1 – Proposal for the Transfer of West Midland PCC Functions to the Mayor of the Combined Authority)

Tim Martin, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) introduced the report that set out the independent analysis of the two-stage public consultation exercise. He then informed the Panel that following a detailed discussion, the WMCA Board on 22 March 2019 had resolved not to support the proposed transfer of PCC powers and responsibilities to the West Midlands Mayor.

The Panel was advised that as a result of the Board decision all formal steps associated with the proposed transfer were now off the table and there would be separate elections in 2020 for the PCC and West Midlands Mayor positions.

The Panel asked what the next steps would be and how the Panel could help to support this. The WMCA representatives explained it would continue to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) on policing, public safety and crime matters.

Ashley Bertie Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner (APCC) assured the Panel that the PCC would continue work with the Combined Authority, the West Midlands Mayor and all partners to support the region and ensure the public had access to the right services. It was further highlighted that whilst the discussions on the proposed transfer may have appeared adversarial, the two organisations had a close and open working relationship with the PCC, Mayor and officers meeting regularly. There was a programme of joint working the Panel might wish to examine that included safer travel, mental health, youth justice, adverse childhood experiences, secure accommodation for children, rough sleepers, unauthorised encampments, hate crime and road safety.

Panel members asked for more details about the WMCA Board debate and reason for its decision not to proceed with the transfer. It was noted that questions had been raised about the Twitter exchange relating to the consultation and its impact on the legitimacy of the consultation process. Points were also made about the number of consultation responses compared to the West Midlands population. Comments had been made about whether the transfer would result in better policing at a time of increasing crime and the current challenges on the police. Opposition at the meeting has also focused on the finances, decision making, police accountability, the role of the Deputy Mayor for Policing and the balance with other mayoral responsibilities.

Mr Martin stressed that the public consultation exercise had been professionally conducted to accepted standards. A validation exercise had seen 65 questionable responses removed and the response rate was considered quite high for such a consultation.

Ashley Bertie APCC explained the PCC's consideration of proposals had been based on whether it was in the best interest of people in region, the efficiency and effectiveness of the force and whether a decision could be based on the consultation result.

The Panel asked the WMCA representatives and the OPCC what lessons had been learnt from the process and how they would reflect on comments made in consultation about more police on streets, and the value of and level of understanding of the Mayor and PCC roles.

Closing the debate the Chair thanked the WMCA officers for attending panel meetings.

RESOLVED:-

- i. That the report be noted; and
- ii. The WMCA Board decision of 22 March 2019 not to transfer the PCC powers and responsibilities to the West Midland Mayor be noted.

HIDDEN CRIME

458 The following report was submitted:-

(See document No.2- Detecting and Preventing Hidden Crimes)

Ashley Bertie, APCC introduced the report that set out the progress made towards the Police and Crime Plan objectives relating to hidden crime. Chief Superintendent Claire Bell then responded to a number of questions from Members. During the course of the debate the following points were made:

- i. There was a significant difference in the level of recorded crime and charges. The crime recording rules required all reported offences to be recorded, even if it was reported by a professional third party, where the details may be vague and the victim did not wish to pursue it. In some areas 50% of victims did not wish to pursue a prosecution. This was a challenge WMP were seeking to address. There were alternative outcomes to formal charging and if these were required to be formally recorded it would better reflect the efforts of the police.
- ii. A Panel member highlighted concerns that the Legal Aid requirement to provide evidence of finance situations disadvantaging victims of financial abuse who may not have access to household finances. It was noted the West Midlands Police (WMP) had no involvement with legal aid for victims.
- iii. Responding to a question about how WMP demonstrated an understanding of cultural and honour barriers that victims could face when reporting crimes. Claire Bell highlighted the multi-faceted approach taken by the force that included continued communication with communities; a neighbourhood policing model embedding local officers into local communities; recruitment of officers to reflect communities to provide a visual confidence; and Operational Sentinel driving awareness training.
- iv. The APCC assured the Panel that many local organisations had been commissioned to provide victim services. One community project was given as an example in the report.
- v. The APCC undertook to look into a comment that the Victim Commission had no BME members and no BME issues had been discussed at the Victim Commission's Conference.
- vi. Asked for a reaction to the Centre for Women Justice Super-Complaint into police failure to use Domestic Violence Protection Orders and other measures, Claire Bell understood this to be a national complaint alleging police were not trained in relevant

- legislation. She advised the Members that WMP was using orders robustly and had a dedicated unit of specialist staff. There had been convictions for breaches.
- vii. Panel members noted the rise in child abuse cases and the large volume of child neglect cases.
 - viii. Concern was raised about delays in the WMP Public Protection Unit (PPU) contacting victims. It was explained that a contact plan was created for every case in line with the victim's wishes. It was highlighted that despite the investment in the PPU to 800 officers, it was very busy and decisions had to be made to tailor services to those at greatest risk. Claire Bell welcomed feedback and offered to look at any specific cases.
 - ix. The Panel asked for information on the number of schools taking up the Operation Encompass initiative that supported children subject or witness to incidents of domestic abuse. It was noted the programme had been delivered in Dudley and Coventry with school consent and local safeguarding board involvement.

RESOLVED:-

- i. That the report be noted; and
- ii. Information on the number of schools taking up Operation Encompass and BME representation on the Victims Commission be provided to the Panel.

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S UPDATE

459 The following report of the Police and Crime Commissioner was received:-

(See document No. 4 – *Recent PCC decisions*)

Ashley Bertie APCC updated the Panel of the following:-

- i. The APCC praised the harmonious spirit of local communities following the recent attack on four mosques in Birmingham. An arrest had been made and an individual detained under the Mental Health Act.
- ii. The Home Office was expected to announce how the £100m national funding to tackle violent crime would be allocated. In the West Midlands the Gangs and Violence Commission would steer this work.
- iii. WMP Operation Cantil tackling vehicle crime had recovered 800 cars and made 1500 arrests.
- iv. WMP continued to use enhanced Stop and Search powers to address knife crime.
- v. The PCC was hosting a summit about school exclusions. Members discussed the level of engagement of schools with initiatives to tackle violence and knife crime, the role parents can play and suggested the reinstatement of police school liaison officers.

CHAIR' NOTE OF THANKS

460 As this was the last Panel meeting of the 2018/19 Municipal Year the Chair thanked Panel Members and support officers for their work over the year, and the PCC and OPCC for its collaboration.

Ashley Bertie, APCC thanked the Panel for its support and scrutiny challenge throughout the year.

The meeting ended at 16:00

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CHAIR