



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

Notes of Meeting Held on Tuesday 20th July 2021 1000 – 1300 hrs

Remote Access Meeting (using Zoom Technology)

Attendees:

Wasim Ali	:	Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner
Nicky BRENNAN	:	Victims Commissioner
Charmaine BURTON	:	Board Member
Sue DAVIS	:	Chair, Joint Audit Committee
Simon FOSTER	:	Police and Crime Commissioner
Alethea FULLER	:	Deputy Chief Executive
Bhupinder GAKHAL	:	Board Member
Catherine HANNON	:	Board Member
Jonathan JARDINE	:	Chief Executive
Venessa JARDINE	:	Deputy Chief Constable
Mark KENYON	:	Chief Finance Officer
Tom MCNEIL	:	Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner
Nicola PRICE	:	Director of People and Organisation Development
David THOMPSON	:	Chief Constable
Chris TODD	:	Assistant Chief Constable

Plus one note taker and seven observers

Apologies:

There were no apologies

Please Note:

1. *This meeting was recorded and the entire discussion can be found here:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dWUx0iaLtQ>
2. *The reports referred to throughout this meeting can be viewed here:*
<https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/archive/spcb-july-2021/>

029/21	<p>Item 1: PCC Update:</p> <p>The Commissioner made the following comments -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Strategic Policing and Crime Board is a dynamic and hardworking team that brings a wealth of experience which will support the work of the Commissioner to deliver justice, safety and security for people of the West Midlands. • Requested the Chief Constable to conduct a review of the Estates programme taking into account the impacts of the pandemic and the police officer uplift programme.
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	<p>Recommendations from the review and the Commissioner's response will be considered at the September Strategic Police and Crime Board."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commissioner stands in solidarity with England players subjected to racism and hate, and he trusts that those responsible will be held to account by the criminal justice system. • Drew attention to Dame Carol Black's review of drugs phase 2, welcoming this review and its' recommendations.
<p>030/21</p>	<p>Item 2: Petitions:</p> <p>Greg Dickinson provided an overview of the petition and the following points were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road safety in general and the increasing prevalence of excess speed in residential areas was recognised as a significant concern to the Commissioner and to the public in general. Roads policing should be a priority for the Police and Crime Plan and a matter that must be tackled in partnership with others. <p>Further action required: the long term issues should be tackled by Birmingham City Council. However, the Chief Constable said that he would consult the Neighbourhood Policing Unit on possible measures to tackle speeding.</p>
<p>031/21</p>	<p>Item 3: Questions from Members of the Public:</p> <p>No Questions from members of the public.</p>
<p>032/21</p>	<p>Item 4: Questions from the Board on matters not on the agenda:</p> <p>Q1) The local press recently reported that an investigation into racist abuse among taxi drivers in Birmingham found shocking levels of 'daily' incidents, drivers suffering in silence and calls for more action from local authorities and the police. What will West Midlands Police's response be to these disturbing findings? (Asked by Tom McNeil)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Constable acknowledged that frontline roles such as taxi drivers are unfortunately frequently subject to racist abuse. • The Force has already committed to work around the emergence of the night time economy to ensure the issue of racist abuse is factored into local plans. • Good practice was identified in Derbyshire, carried out by Tell MAMA, in terms of reporting practise in relation to hate crime and abuse. Work with Tell MAMA is being done to ensure hate crime awareness is much stronger among taxi drivers in the West Midlands. • Hate crime is increasing in the West Midlands but hate Crime Reporting is also increasing. • The Chief Constable echoed that there is a growing willingness in society to both challenge and report racist behaviour. • The Force will remain in touch with taxi and transport operators in terms of the night time economy work and encourage the use of the hate crime app which is currently being developed. <p>Follow up: Are there any existing particular challenges to then being able to successfully follow up on a hate crime report? Is there anything that can be done to improve the ability to bring people to justice?</p>

(Asked by Tom McNeil)

- In some cases, alleged instances of hate crime may not constitute criminal offences, although a pragmatic approach will still be taken in order to deal with these cases.
- In relation to instances that are crimed, the Force will always look to develop an evidential standard, particularly though utilising CCTV. Crimed instances of hate crime are a priority for the force.
- Regardless of how the case is dealt with, the Chief Constable encouraged people to come forward and report instances of hate crime.
- Out of court disposals are also utilised in this area, as it is most important in changing individual's behaviour. Particularly in cases which are less severe or not evidentially as strong, out of court disposals are used.

Q2) Can the Chief Constable explain what steps West Midlands Police is taking to support efforts across the Criminal Justice System to reduce backlogs?

(Asked by Cath Hannon)

- The Chief Constable reassured the Board that there are a number of steps being taken to support efforts to reduce backlogs across the criminal justice system.
- The Chief Superintendent of criminal justice oversees tackling the backlog directly.
- A witness care strategy has been put in place to tackle the backlog and reduce waiting attrition.
- Recruitment of 5 additional staff members has taken place to try and deal with some of the increasing cases in the witness care unit.
- Bespoke signposting to witnesses has been carried out to link in with support agencies.
- Monthly case listing review with the court service takes place to balance vulnerable cases that need to reach court quickly within the listing structure.
- Court backlogs in the Magistrates Courts are recovering, especially with the trial blitz planned in the coming months.
- The Force is also attempting to look at fast track cases around Domestic Abuse and youth cases to improve expediency.
- Additional training and support for staff is being put in place around assisting with Domestic Abuse victims.

Further action required:

A fuller detailed note will be sent through in relation to this question by the Chief Constable.

Follow up: Criminal Justice backlogs are clearly a partnership issue and includes, although not exclusively, CPS, probation and the courts system. Are there any particular challenges in relation to partnership working with regards to COVID?

(Asked by Cath Hannon)

- There have been various iterations of this challenge throughout the pandemic, such as the debate around the work required for in person remand hearings.
- The key to this is the close cooperative working around listing, the Force and the CPS need to ensure that complex cases reach court as quickly as possible.
- The PCC emphasised that there was a pre-existing court backlog that has since been affected by the pandemic which was as a consequence of Government failing to fund judicial sitting days.
- Ultimately, Government needs to put robust planning in place to tackle the backlog.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme delays put pressure on the viability of cases. • The PCC has raised this directly with the Policing Minister. <p>Q3) There is evidence that there has been an increase in the incidence of fake emails, texts and phone calls during the Pandemic pretending to be from banks, NHS, delivery companies etc. What actions is West Midlands Police taking to provide information to the wider public to increase awareness of cyber-security to reduce the risk of people falling foul of phishing emails and similar scams?</p> <p>(Asked by Charmaine Burton)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the volume crimes, such as burglaries, vehicle crimes and robberies, are experiencing significant reduction which has taken place over the last few years. • There is also a shift towards digital online forms, which are often scams sent to a mobile phone via text. • These scams are often national and international, meaning that national bodies such as the National Crime Agency and national security structures are supported by WMP in tackling them. • A lot of work has been done to signpost victims of scams. • WMNow is used to raise emerging scams identified by the Economic Crime Unit. <p>Q4) The use of LiveChat and online reporting as new channels into West Midlands Police is to be welcomed, but what steps is West Midlands Police taking to ensure that its services remain accessible to those with special requirements and those who suffer digital exclusion?</p> <p>(Asked by Bhupinder Gakhal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital services are an additional offer as opposed to removing existing routes. • LiveChat for example is a preferential contact method for the Force, however, 101 emergency service is still available and prompt. • In terms of services in general, the digital offer is preferred but is an addition, not a replacement. • The digital service is deemed to be better for those who experience difficulty with their hearing and where English may not be their first language. • Routes for everyone must be provided.
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POLICE AND CRIME PLAN	
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033/2021	<p>Item 5: Police and Crime Plan</p> <p><i>Jonathan Jardine provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed:</i></p> <p><i>How will the Police and Crime Panel be involved with the development of the Police and Crime Plan?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel has a statutory role at the end of the process, at which point it will review the Plan and make recommendations which the Commissioner must respond to publicly. • The Panel has a scheduled meeting in September and it is likely that this meeting will be devoted entirely to consideration of the Police and Crime Plan.
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- The Panel has also undertaken an evidence gathering exercise, involving a number of individuals and organisations which will coalesce into a report/summary detailing what they have observed.
- Police and Crime Panel members will utilise their status as councillors to gain an understanding of how community safety partnerships are responding to the Plan as it is being developed.
- Civic leaders can support in the approach to partnership working.

In relation to the round table events, is a 4 week period enough to gather thoughts and feedback for all partners across the West Midlands?

- The Commissioner wants to make sure that the consultation is appropriate in its scale and reach to the West Midlands' population.
- At the same time, the Commissioner has been clear that the Police and Crime Plan is to be delivered on an urgent scale.
- The four thematic roundtables which are taking place are aimed at individuals who can speak on behalf of organisations, networks etc.
- In looking to consult a wider audience, there will be a consultation phase that will start at the end of July 2021 and remain ongoing for 6 weeks to try and generate a significant response from wider audiences.

How will consultation be promoted? Those who do not engage online, how will they be engaged with? When is the deadline for the end of the consultation?

- The media strategy is to promote the consultation through engaging with a series of different media outlets.
- In terms of audiences that aren't online, this is how paid conventional media and social media are important, written submissions for example are valuable.
- The consultation closes mid-September, this then allows 2 weeks' following the close of the consultation to consolidate the results.
- Some of the consultation will involve young people when schools return in early September.

How do we find a way with engaging with members of the public which explains some of the challenges?

- Some of the aspects of policing that don't get mentioned in a more superficial survey seem to get taken for granted, e.g. abuse, counter terrorism etc.
- There will be a supporting document for the survey to provide some of the contextual information.
- Some of the roundtable exercises were already aware of some of the prioritisation issues described given the expertise of the audiences.
- The approach being taken to youth engagement and locality engagement via the community safety partnerships will be supported by the OPCC with regards to the prioritisation issues.

How do we work with young people to ensure that the voice of young people is reflected in the Police and Crime Plan?

- A strong set of forums will be held to ensure that the lived experience and voice of young people is heard. Staff will be going out to these forums to present on the Plan and collate these views.
- Youth Commissioners are highly motivated and put themselves into challenging leadership roles at a young age to collate views.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Cadets representing a different cohort of young people, enthusiastic and interested in policing, and can offer an alternative perspective. • Youth networks supported by the Violence Reduction Unit again reach a different cohort in terms of young people from a lived experience perspective. <p><i>Do we collect demographic data on survey consultation responders? Is it identified whether an individual has been a victim of crime and has this been recorded.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and location data is recorded. <p>Further action required: With regard to whether respondents have been a victim of crime, this will be picked up as a part of the survey development moving forward.</p> <p><i>Is the police and crime panel broadcast live?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Police and Crime Plan is easily accessible on YouTube in the same way as the Strategic Policing and Crime Board.
034/21	<p>Item 6: Joint Audit Committee Annual Report</p> <p>Chair of the Joint Audit Committee (JAC), Sue Davis, provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed:</p> <p><i>Are there more opportunities to share the insights gathered by the Joint Audit Committee? Is there capacity to disseminate this information in a neat and accessible way?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a process in which issues raised are flagged and then embedded into the Force policies and practices. • The Chief Constable echoes that Audit is fundamentally important to the work of the Force. For example, the work carried out on missing people and the HMIC work is to a good quality and of high value. • Internal audit team provide a breadth and depth of deep enquiries into a variety of different matters with specialist knowledge. <p>Further action required: Discussion with Chair of JAC in advance of the next meeting, to consider options for developing a 'lessons learnt' approach.</p> <p><i>What arrangements are in place for the induction and training for new members of the Board and the Audit Committee? Could more detail be provided in connection with page 8 paragraph 5?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full induction programme is planned. In relation to area 3, the breach related to the purchase of PPE at the beginning of the pandemic. West Midlands Police purchased a substantial amount of PPE. There was nothing inappropriate or incorrect about the purchase, but rather with the timing, and this was reported to the previous PCC. • Second point is around lending. Previously local authorities were used as a source of lending, but due to budgetary constraints this is no longer possible. The matter is being reviewed, but police monies have not been placed at risk.
	<p>EMERGING ITEMS</p>

035/2021

Item 7: Budget and Monitoring Report 2021/22

Mark Kenyon provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed:

What are the key financial pressures on the force?

- Main pressure is around demand for police services. For example, the Force must react to unforeseen events which may incur overtime.
- There may also be inflation around pay and general items.
- Expectations around income for fees and charges that might vary during the year.
- Assumptions around pay inflation and other inflation might vary during the year.
- External pressures that may materialise.
- The main issue moving forward is council tax income. There has been a grant from government to cover council tax collection, although this may not be enough moving forward given that people may struggle to pay council tax.

Has the Force managed to balance the books with money spent on COVID?

- The key issue surrounding COVID is the unpredictability of it, especially in relation to service pressures. The majority of additional spend has been covered by Home Office grants.

Given the potential impact arising from mental health, homelessness etc., are there enough conversations with partners to really explore and understand each other's budgets?

- A large number of projects have involved discussions about budget constraints and co-funding.
- The Commissioner should not be seen as a funder of last resort.

In relation to revenue forecasts, is value for money being achieved in terms of transport, supplies and service? Has the Force looked at extra sources of internal income?

- In terms of value for money, all supplies and service go through a procurement exercise which tests for price and quality for suppliers.

The Force is considering the regulators value for money indicators in order to gauge performance in comparison to other forces

Could we become more involved in developing the NHS Integrated care systems agenda? Is there a layman's way of describing the funding inequality between West Midlands Police and other Forces?

- We rely in the West Midlands on a funding formula which results in the Force losing out considerably in terms of the police funding settlement.
- Council tax precept is the second lowest in the country, meaning the ability to raise council tax is limited due to both the council tax rate and council tax bases.

In relation to page 3 paragraph 7, what work are the panels undertaking over the next month and moving forward?

- In summary, priority-based budgeting is looking at the way money can be saved throughout the Force, looking at the inputs and outputs and being mindful of what can be changed.
- Along with this exercise, the finance department is also looking at aspects such as procurement saving.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ideas from the services will go to the panels in August to deliver an outcome in early September which will examine how the Force can save money in these particular areas.
036/21	<p>Item 8: Crime and Performance</p> <p><i>DCC Jardine provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed:</i></p> <p><i>What plans are there to drive an increase into the WMNow sign up in particular for impact areas and underrepresented groups?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is one of the key performance indicators, as it is an important way in which members of the public can make a continual input. It is a priority focus and a huge increase in signups in impact areas was observed during Black History Week. One example being Lozells. It was acknowledged that WMNow is a part of core policing and will continue to be rolled out to impact areas. <p><i>What work is being done to help children through the problems they're facing that may result in a missing child case, or to ensure young people are not being caught up in county lines and criminality? What is the plan to increase expediency of training for core skills across a wide range of portfolio areas?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many missing children have complex lives and backgrounds, the Force aim to gain a wider understanding of the issues that young people face, this is done in partnership with safeguarding hubs and through the Violence Reduction Unit. COVID has a significant impact around the Force's ability to carry out face to face training, and there are now timelines and guidance on how to receive training from the College of Policing. Officers are being deployed to national events and courses are being facilitated to fulfil those obligations. <p><i>What is being done to recruit more PCSOs from the minority ethnic communities?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Midlands Police maintain a significantly higher proportion of PCSOs whereas many other forces decided this would be an area to cut during austerity. Commitment also around the Prince's Trust with PCSOs supporting a number of these schemes. The PCSO role has been shifted to an engagement focus, such as junior PCSO schemes and Operation Street watch. Numbers cannot be increased anymore currently and we are on the right position with the engagement at the moment. It is a priority area for the Force to recruit representative PCSOs. <p><i>Is domestic abuse reporting still increasing, or is it now levelling off?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMP has not seen a significant increase in DA incidents that have been reported, rather, improvements are being made in recording practices. Force are now improving crime data integrity to make sure we capture every single crimed incident that has occurred. PCC Has recently announced doubling IDVAS and ISVAS. On 101 and 999, the Force is regularly receiving over 6000 calls a day. <p>Further action required: Further discussion on the focus on emergencies, which has led to an increase in waiting times for non-emergencies.</p>

	<p><i>What is being done to understand why underrepresented groups leave West Midlands Police?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMP understand the need to constantly explore why people are making the decision to leave, and work is being done to explore this. One such method for this is carrying out exit interviews.
037/21	<p>Item 9: Organisational Health</p> <p><i>ACC Todd provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed;</i></p> <p><i>What are the plans for international students who will be coming to the West Midlands in September, and are there any crime prevention initiatives planned</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International students will have to comply with the restrictions that are relevant to their country of origin. There are no specific policing responsibilities in relation to international students other than the restrictions on travel which students will need to expect. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is close liaison with universities in place to maintain direct relationships with student bodies to promote crime prevention. • This is expedited through systems maintained by Neighbourhood Policing Units. • Force will also be mindful of unoccupied places of residence over the summer and conduct patrols when necessary. <p><i>Why are cases continued, dismissed or withdrawn then reissued regarding the fines? What happens to offenders who do not pay fines?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasons as to why cases are withdrawn are highly varied. Cases that go through are submitted to ACRO and assessed against public interest and evidential standards. • Practices have improved over the course of 15 months. At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a higher rate of prosecution that had to be withdrawn, with internal measures being put in place before those. • The 4Es has been the approach taken by the force has been taken by the force throughout the pandemic and will continue to be taken throughout. <p><i>How many complaints and misconduct matters relating to West Midlands Police have arisen that can be attributed to the responses to the pandemic?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to policing of the pandemic, there have been 5 conduct matters for officers and staff, with 1 of those resulting in reflective practice, 1 had not been proven and 3 are still live and ongoing so cannot be reported on. • Overall, there have been 368 complaints from members of the public. 215 of those related to the standard of service levels. • 107 complaints have been made around powers and policy that have developed in response to the pandemic. • There are 80 complaints relating to the individual behaviour of officers. 335 of those public complaints were resolved. 10 were upheld. 5 resulted in misconduct matters. The remainder remains ongoing. <p><i>How is West Midlands Police looking after officers during the pandemic?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force has made PPE highly available from the outset of the pandemic, and the Force has been accessing government grants to support this.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • The Force has engaged in a varied programme of activity throughout the pandemic in order to protect and support officers and staff. • The Chief Constable echoed that 2020-2021 has been the toughest year ever seen in 30 years of policing.
038/21	<p>Item 10: Staffing and Recruitment</p> <p><i>Nicola Price provided an overview of the report and the following points were discussed:</i></p> <p><i>What changes have been made in negotiation with the higher education partner, what are the benefits of these changes? What support is being provided for individuals applying to the force in relation to reasonable adjustments?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ratio of PCDA to direct entry was originally 60% PCDA and 40% direct entry programme. • Now, there is a two year as opposed to a three year direct entry programme. One of the reasons for doing this is that there is a more diverse range of applicants with the direct entry programme, this has also led significant cost savings. • There is an element of drop out from the recruitment process, and this included 600 candidates who were from different ethnic minorities. Contact was made with these candidates to gauge why they dropped out of the process and what might encourage them to continue. • 167 candidates were converted back into the process and supported through a boutique service delivered by the positive action team including fitness days and assisting them with their applications process. <p><i>Regarding the degree apprenticeship route, does this route help new recruits help understand issues such as the role of childhood trauma in people's vulnerability to crime? Does it pay enough attention to understanding the sensitivities around sexual abuse and sexual violence cases? Is there a developed programme around the power of community problem solving and partnership work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The curriculum is determined by the college of policing. • The academic element is where some of the policing issues are explored by recruits. Through the PDUs and mentors that students have, they will gain important knowledge and skills such as the role of childhood trauma, sensitivities around sexual abuse and sexual violence cases etc. • Quality assurance groups and education groups are worked with in Staffordshire University to ensure the content of the course is suitable. <p>Further action required: further discussion and reporting how the Force are recruiting people from hard to reach communities.</p> <p><u><i>Recruiting from hard to reach communities:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A gold group has been set up which has 15 work streams. • The Force has changed the way in which it targets and advertises. • The Force also works with Neighbourhood Policing Units to carry out targeted leaflet dropping as well as setting up recruitment stands. • There is also a go-to app for officers where they can do a quick search on behalf of individual to determine the base eligibility to become a police officer.

039/21	<p>Item 11: Chief Constable Update</p> <p>The Chief Constable commended the work of the Force during the pandemic. Moving out of the pandemic, the Force will continue to maintain the use of PPE and social distancing as a way of maintaining organisational resilience. The Chief Constable also encouraged the public to contact the Force through digital channels and to consider the urgency of their cases. The Force is conscious that there is a shift of crime from a public space to private space.</p>
040/21	<p>Item 12: SPCB Workplan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the Workplan is finalised, this will be a regular agenda item and will include outstanding actions and themes for future discussion.
041/21	<p>Item 13: Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The Commissioner thanked the Chief Constable, the Force and Board members for their detailed reports and discussion.</p> <p>The Public Session of the meeting concluded at 12:58.</p>