



# Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel Minutes - 4 December 2014

## Attendance

### Members of the Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Andrew Wynne (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Barry Findlay  
Cllr Keith Inston  
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz  
Cllr Richard Whitehouse

### Employees

Deborah Breedon	Scrutiny Officer
Keren Jones	Service Director - City Economy
Karen Samuels	Head of Community Safety

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No. Title*

- 1 Apologies**  
Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Ian Brookfield and Tersaim Singh who are attending official Council business and for Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting (20 November 2014)**  
Resolved:  
That the minutes of the 20 November 2014 be approved and signed as an accurate copy.
- 4 Matters arising**  
There were no matters arising.
- 5 Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy Update**  
Cllr Elias Mattu and Karen Samuels, Head of Community Safety, provided a progress report relating to delivery of the City's Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy 2014-17.

The Head of Community Safety outlined delivering the outcomes against each of the strategic priorities:

- Reducing reoffending
- Substance misuse
- Gangs/youth crime
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Prevent
- Support for victims
- Safeguarding: Reducing harm and vulnerability

The Head of Community Safety explained that the delivery of the strategy is being undertaken against a backdrop of unprecedented organisational change and resource reductions across all sectors and informed the panel that the 'Local Police and Crime Plan' enables sufficient flexibility to be maintained within partner operating models to respond to changing need and that this needs to be supported by regular monitoring and negotiating with partners.

The Head of Community Safety referred particularly to the areas of Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) that are underperforming and have not improved:

- Contracted drug and alcohol service
- Levels of Public Place Violence with Injury (PPV)

She advised of the mitigating circumstances outlined in the report and gave assurance that they are being closely monitored and that improvement plans were in place.

CI Tracey Packham, West Midlands Police, informed the panel that trying to turn around the performance relating to PPV is a priority for the police. She advised that there has been an increase in policing of the night time economy between the hours of 24:00 – 03:00 and that other changes were being made relating to drugs agency referrals. She advised that from time of the performance report to date that there had been a 30% reduction in PPV and that this was good news as only two local policing forces in the country to see a turn-around in this type of offending.

Cllr Richard Whitehouse welcomed the report and congratulated the police on performance improvement. Cllr Simkins referred to the guns and gangs strategy and asked how the Council and partners mitigate against the reduction in youth provision and resources in the city. The Chair voiced concerns at the low level of resource to deliver preventative measures and asked what recourse this would have for the broader areas.

In response to questions the Head of Community Safety outlined a number of measures and remedial actions that were taking place to mitigate the reduction in resource. She advised that in relation to PPV preventative measures are small actions which will reduce the risk of PPV, such as better street lighting/street furnishing. Further changes are occurring Wolverhampton is a provider of services relating to drugs rehabilitation; the relationship between licensing, Council and the police has been strengthened as shown in the draft statement of licensing policy (item 7 on the agenda).

Cllr Stephen Simkins asked for a paper to be brought back to this panel relating to the strategy of the Council to work with businesses and police to reduce crime in the City. The Service Director, Keren Jones referred to the City Centre bid and advised that environmental improvements and safety are at the top of the list. CI Tracey Packham advised that there is a lot of work on-going to establish a purple flag standard flag to improve safety. Colin Parr, Licensing Manager, referred to the inclusion for a place of safety for people who have consumed excess alcohol to sit, to get them off the streets, keep them in a safe environment and get them home safely. He supported the suggestion of purple flag standard in the city and said it may be possible if we work in triage with partners.

Resolved:

That the comments of the scrutiny panel are noted in relation to progress achieved to date in delivering the City's Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy 2014-17.

## 6 **Wolverhampton Local Policing and Crime Plan 2014/15**

CI Tracey Packham, West Midlands Police, introduced the item. She explained that the paper for scrutiny provides an update around action taken and progress made in relation to Neighbourhood specific issues.

CI Tracey Packham gave updates on the following key issues:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Inconsiderate parking
- Prostitution

In response to questions CI Tracey Packham advised that the inconsiderate parking relates primarily to parking around schools as this tends to generate most of the complaints. She advised that Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) are waiting outside schools; notices have been circulated and other areas initiatives are being looked at such as speed watch.

There was a discussion about creating a drop off loops as part of a longer term solution to address the problems around schools. The panel identified that this must be in partnership with schools and that other partners may have something to say here relating to cleaner and greener ways of travel and healthier lifestyles. The review group felt that is an important tool, to bring the community and schools together, to debate the matter.

Cllr Andrew Wynne indicated that many of the issues raised have been previously a task that neighbourhood wardens have undertaken. He asked what impact this would have on the police. CI Tracey Packham advised that West Midlands Police have responded to the budget consultation and that the response will take this matter into account.

Resolved

That the report is noted

## 7 **Draft Licensing Policy Changes**

Colin Parr, Licensing Manager, provided a detailed report to consider the draft Statement of Licensing Policy as part of the statutory consultation process. He clarified that scrutiny is not a statutory consultee but that any comments would feed back into the Licensing Committee.

The Licensing Manager presented the report, giving detailed account of each of the proposals in the report. He responded to questions relating to the proposed extension of the City Centre Cumulative Impact Zone.

The Licensing Manager advised that a responsible authority's forum has been created to coordinate multiagency responses to licensing applications and feed back to the Licensing Committee, consisting of:

- Public Health
- Police
- Environmental Health
- Licensing

In response to questions relating to the revisions to the Cumulative Impact Policy and the proposed extension of the Cumulative Impact Zones (CIZ) the licensing Manager advised:

- The first revision is to extend the city centre CIZ. Additionally there are four new areas proposed:
  - Dudley Road (On and off Licences)
  - Avion Centre (Off licences)
  - Bilston High Street (On and off licences)
  - Wednesfield High Street (On and off licences)
- Businesses have to demonstrate the need to hold a licence, there is not a quota per area
- If there are issues raised the responsible authority needs to object at licensing committee
- Premises included are bars and restaurants, shops and supermarkets
- The proposed five compliance posts will be paid for in licensing fees

The scrutiny panel considered the problems with anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the city centre, particularly the problems with on street drinking. The Licensing Manager advised that the citywide CIZ for on-street drinking had been a risk, however the judicial review period was now over and the consequences are very evidential. He clarified that there is a need for the thresholds used to be accurate and there is a need to link violence to the premises.

There were further discussion relating to nuisance drinking in and around the Avion Centre and Parkfields. The Licensing Manager had confidence that there will be capacity to grow in the future to encompass more areas to include Newhampton.

The Chair, Cllr Stephen Simkins, voiced concerns about the unacceptable levels of alcohol related crimes and ASB, he highlighted the need for a robust policy in relation

to licensing of on and off licences. He welcomed the proposals and suggested that there needs to be robust guides on numbers of alcohol outlets and more work with businesses to ensure regular checks and adjustments are carried out to put up standards. Cllr Barry Findlay welcomed the proposals as a good way forward to improve standards.

Resolved:

That the comments of the Vibrant Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel are considered as part of the statutory consultation process

## 8 **Contacting the Police - Front office closures**

The Chair, Cllr Stephen Simkins, advised the scrutiny panel members that he had asked for this information item to be included because he felt that there had been no meaningful consultation and the review of front offices at police stations has had implications for local communities.

CI Tracey Packham confirmed that there had been a consultation process to consider how people engage with the police and how they want to do so in the future carried out by BMG Research and Consultation Company. She confirmed that there had been surveys completed by front office visitors, open consultation between 28 May 2014 and 2 July 2014 and a web chat. She advised that not many adverse comments came back through consultation.

CI Tracey Packham advised that a letter had been circulated to all councillors and interviews with some of the people who had been surveyed.

The outcome of the consultation was that 90% of those people who responded to consultation wanted contact by telephone.

Cllr Greg Brackenbridge indicated that he had received and returned the consultation letter; he welcomed the closure of local front offices as a good measure to save resource. He indicated that if people wanted contact by telephone it may no longer a viable option to keep it open. The Chair had real concerns that closure of Bilston police station front office was a retrograde step.

The Chair advised that Judy Foster, the Assistant Police Commissioner would be attending the next meeting of the scrutiny panel 5 February 2015 and suggested that she and Cllr Elias Mattu, Cabinet Member be invited to comment on front office closures at the meeting.

Resolved

That the paper be noted