

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 27 November 2018

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Simon Bennett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Sohail Khan
Cllr Linda Leach (Chair)
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Zee Russell

Witnesses

Ashely Bertie
Mary Jacobs

Assistant Police Crime Commissioner
Partnerships and Engagement Officer

Employees

James Barlow
Earl Piggott-Smith
Alison Shannon
David Watts

Senior Accounting Officer
Scrutiny Officer
Chief Accountant
Director of Adult Services

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following:

Councillor Rupinderjit Kaur
Councillor Sandra Samuels
James Barlow

Apologies had been submitted previously by Cllr Sohail Khan but were not recorded.

The panel agreed to note the apologies.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

3 **Minutes of previous meetings (25.9.18)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Agenda Item 7 Overview of the Adult Education Offer and Outcomes for residents

Cllr Sohail Khan reported back from a visit to the Adult Education Service. The visit included a meeting with staff and students. Cllr Khan commented that the visit was very positive, and he had learnt a great deal and encouraged by the response from students about the importance work being done to improve skills and knowledge. Cllr Khan met with staff who outlined the current curriculum education offer for adults and the future development of the City Learning Quarter. Cllr Khan encouraged others to attend.

5 **The West Midlands Police and Crime Plan 2016-20**

Ashley Bertie, Assistant Policy Crime Commissioner, APCC thanked for panel for the invitation to attend the panel meeting. The APCC introduced Mary Jacobs, Partnerships and Engagement Officer, West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

The APCC outlined the role and responsibilities of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the relationship with Chief Constable of West Midlands Police. The PCC responsibility covers seven local authorities' regions.

The APCC explained that the priorities of the PCC are detailed in the Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020, against which he is held to account by the public and representatives of the Police and Crime Panel.

The APCC commented on the low level of re-offending across the region and reduction in recorded crime rate. The APCC commented that an important success of the work done by PCC was fewer people entering the criminal justice, as a result of focusing on reducing violent crime and street gangs.

The APCC commented on work done to increase confidence by the public in the police and also managing the challenge presented by the loss of 2000 police officers and delivering budget savings of £125 million. The APCC commented on the areas of increased demand on the police to deal with complex issues ranging from child sexual exploitation to female genital mutilation, which has presented a number of challenges.

The APCC commented on the impact of reduced spending by other public sector bodies which has reduced services which in the past would have supported many of the groups that the service is having to care for with limited resources.

The Chair invited members of the panel to question the APCC on the performance of PCC. The panel queried what changes had been made in the list of priority areas detailed in the Police and Crime Panel, and also if any new priorities had emerged since it was produced. The APCC commented on the increase in reports of hate crime, domestic violence as new emerging issue that the police are dealing with. The APCC explained that the PCC is not involved in any decisions about policing operational matters but is working with the Chief Constable who will be held to account by the PCC to achieve them. The changing nature of drug misuse has had a

major impact on policing resources and the view of the PCC was that the 'war on drugs' had failed.

The APCC accepted that the police are not giving the public the right level of service based on the complaints about response times reported on the non-emergency numbers. The APCC accepted that the police service do not always get it right in terms of responding promptly to calls from the public, but they are working hard to improve the situation.

The APCC commented on issue of vehicle crime and the work being done to reduce the number of illegal 'chop shops' where car parts are sold abroad from cars stolen in the region. The APCC added that 600 illegal 'chop shops' involved in this crime had been closed down.

The APCC commented on the increased numbers reported incidents of hate crime but added that in some situations people do not want to report the matter and would like someone to talk a third-party charity. The APCC added that work is being done with police neighbourhood teams and the Head of Hate Crime in preparation for when the UK leaves the European Union, if there is an increase in reported incidents. The panel were advised that the University of Birmingham have been commissioned to research the issue of hate crime.

The panel queried the lack of explicit reference in the Police and Crime Plan to the PCC meeting its responsibilities as detailed in the Equality Act. The APCC explained that the responsibilities of the Act are at the heart of the work being done by the PCC. The PCC wants the police force to be more representative of the population, at present the number of officers is well below the 34% of the population who are BME background. The APCC commented on the importance of improving the situation and that work continues with the police to create a more diverse workforce. In addition, the PCC wants to give women better opportunities so that they can progress at the same rate as male police officers.

The panel commented of the major delays in getting a response when contacting the police using the non-emergency telephone number and the poor service given to the public. The panel added that the public had struggled to speak to anyone and there was little confidence in the service. The APCC accepted that their problems with the service and reported that there had been fewer complaints received recently and that the performance is being monitored.

The panel queried if a decision had been made to close Wednesfield Police Station. The APCC commented that the PCC view is that the station should not close.

The panel expressed concern about the reduction in special constables and PCSOs and the negative effect that this had on public confidence in the police and reinforced the view that the crime situation is getting worse.

The APCC commented on efforts to consider alternatives to prison for young people such as restorative justice, which is a key part of the PCC's aim that people should be offered support where appropriate rather than prison to reduce the level of crime.

The panel queried the policy of 'stop and search'. The APCC commented that the number of cases has reduced significantly from 64,000 (2011/12) to 1200. An analysis of the cases showed that only 4% of the 64000 cases led to a positive outcome.

Following a change in policing policy to a more intelligent led approach this resulted in an increase of 34% increase in the number of positive outcomes, where something illegal had been found during the search.

The APCC commented that the PCC will investigate complaints arising from 'stop and search' and is working with the police to get a satisfactory solution to the issue for all concerned, when then are complaints.

The panel expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with the 101 non-emergency number and wanted to see progress made to improve the situation. The APCC that the service is driven by demand and there is acceptance that more resources are needed to give the public a better service to reduce lengthy waiting times. The APCC commented on the range of factors contributing to increased demand on the non-emergency service.

The panel discussed progress made to recruit more police officers. The APCC commented on the current recruitment targets based on the budget plans for 2016-20. The APCC added that Government had recently announced the West Midlands Police will have fund pension contributions, estimated at £8.8 million, which will have major implications for service. The APCC added that there was no advance warning given of this plan and difficult decisions will have to be made about the future recruitment of police officers if the decision is not changed.

The APCC commented on the changes in the way serious crimes involving violence which mean the police work is done behind the scenes to reflect the resources available and the demand on the service. The public understand that the police service is working in challenging times but there is commitment from the PCC not to abandon neighbourhood policing.

The APCC agreed to attend a future meeting of the panel to give an update on the future of Wednesfield police station.

The panel queried the share of the Community Safety Funding detailed in Police and Crime Plan, that is used to support local initiatives that had allocated to Wolverhampton, when compared to Birmingham.

The panel commented on the lack of visible police presence in the community and the negative impact on public confidence in dealing concerns about gang violence and public safety. The panel discussed concern that the approach to policing has been more proactive rather than reactive as a result of budget cuts. The APCC advised the panel about the work of the violence prevention alliance which links to work on gang prevention. The PCC has pledged £2 million to support the work and is working with partner organisations to roll out the programme. The APCC commented the progress of the early intervention fund which is not just for Birmingham and it is intended to be used to scale up existing work. The APCC advised the panel of other funding opportunities, for example, The Ministry of Justice, to divert young people from crime and gang related violence.

The APCC commented that there is a national debate on removing the requirement to show reasonable grounds when using 'stop and search'. The PCC has stated that he does not support this change because of concerns about the negative impact on community relations.

The panel discussed how the priorities in the Police and Crime Plan had changed in response to new issues arising since it was first published. The APCC advised the panel that the PCC produces an annual report to give an update on progress against the priorities detailed in the police and crime plan. The report is shared with local councillors and discussed at a meeting of the Police and Crime Panel. The panel queried if there was a different version of the annual report could be drafted that was for the public. The issue of reducing the level of violent crime remains a priority for the PCC but there is an acceptance that it will take time and there is a focus on finding lasting solutions.

The APCC commented on the consultation about a proposal for the transfer of the Police and Crime Commissioner Functions to the West Midlands Mayor in 2020. The APCC outlined the grave concerns of the PCC about the proposal and was disappointed that the public document did not include the changes that were suggested at the time and other options for consideration. The panel were encouraged to complete the online consultation form.

Mary Jacobs, Public Engagement Officer for the Police and Crime Commissioner, commented on work done with youth council to encourage their involvement. The panel were advised that a Youth Summit had been arranged in December 2018 which will provide an opportunity to discuss issues of concern to young people.

The Chair thanked APCC for attending the meeting. The APCC confirmed that he would be willing to attend a future meeting. The APCC agreed to provide the information requested by the panel.

Resolved:

The APCC agreed to provide the information requested by the panel.

- 6 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-2020**
Alison Shannon, Chief Accountant, introduced the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy report and then explained that panel comments on the proposals would be included in the report to Scrutiny Board and Cabinet as part of the consultation process. The Chief Accountant also invited the panel to comment on the budget consultation process itself and changes they would like to see in how the information was presented in the future.

The Chief Accountant explained that an update on the previously reported projected budget challenge of £19.5 million was published in October 2018 which led to a revised budget deficit of £6 million for 2019-2020. The panel were advised that the reduction was achieved because of work done to identify budget efficiencies, budget reduction and income generation opportunities.

The Chief Accountant reported that the report does not provide specific detail on budget efficiency proposals as they do not impact on the provision of services to the

public. There were no budget reduction and income generation proposals relating directly to the remit of the panel.

The panel queried the number of people who attended the public consultation events arranged to get views on the budget proposals. The Chief Accountant noted that there was a good response to the online consultation but figures relating to public meetings were low, the consultation was still ongoing and final figures could be provided at a later date.

The panel were advised that the budget consultation events were promoted using social media, leaflets, the Express and Star and posters near the venues. The event was also promoted on the Council website where the public are also invited to complete an online response form to share their views on the consultation process. This consultation is still ongoing and receives a greater response. The information will be used when reviewing the consultation process.

The panel discussed the effectiveness of the methods used to promote public budget consultation events and suggested further consideration is given to the needs of specific groups and how best to engage them and support their participation. The Chief Accountant accepted that the numbers of people attending budget consultation has traditionally been low. However, the response from the public to the online consultation has been much greater compared to public events.

The panel questioned the use on online consultation methods and emails to engage with members of the public and considered that it was not suitable for some residents.

The panel queried the lack of detail in the report about the budget efficiency proposals where no formal public consultation is required on the basis that they have no impact on service provision. The Chief Accountant advised the panel that some of the savings relate to the release of vacant posts which are no longer considered necessary due to changes in how services are delivered, draw down of one-off grants and efficiencies across non-salary budgets. The Director of Adult Services gave an example of a change in working arrangements at Duke Street which had no effect on service provision.

The panel requested a briefing paper on the implications of budget efficiency proposals relevant to this panel and that this information is shared with the panel to better understand their impact on future service provision. The Chief Accountant agreed to provide the information to the panel. These proposals can be implemented without awaiting the outcome of formal budget consultation process.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy 2019-20 to be included in the feedback for Scrutiny Board meeting on 11 December 2018.
2. The panel comments on scrutiny process of the budget to be considered and presented to Scrutiny Board meeting on 11 December 2018.

Earl Piggott- Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report. Panel members were encouraged to submit topics for inclusion on the draft work programme.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

The meeting closed at 20:00