

20 April 2021

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny

Venue Virtual

Membership

Chair Cllr Paul Sweet (Lab)
Vice-chair Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Con)

Labour

Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

Conservative

Cllr Wendy Thompson

Quorum for this meeting is four Councillors.

Information for the Public

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting** (Pages 3 - 10)
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record.]
- 4 **Matters arising**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 5 **Economic snapshot of the Black Country and City of Wolverhampton and an insight into digital activities across the Black Country**
[To receive a presentation from Sarah Middleton, Chief Executive, Black Country Consortium Limited (BCC)]
- 6 **Update on Digital**
[To receive an update from the Member Champion for Digital]
- 7 **Work programme and future work planning**
[To consider the work programme and work planning moving forwards.]

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Mak Singh
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

In Attendance

Cllr Dr Mike Hardacre	Cabinet Member for Education and Skill
Superintendent Simon Inglis	Wolverhampton NPU
Hannah Pawley	Community Safety Manager
Joanne Keatley	Head of Adult Education
Sarah Campbell	Customer Services Manager
Navdeep Nijjar	Customer Engagement Officer
Julia Cleary	Scrutiny and Systems Manager
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Martin Stevens	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur.
- 2 Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Policing Through the Pandemic and Community Safety Update**

The Chair welcomed Superintendent Simon Inglis and The Community Safety Manager, Hannah Pawley to the meeting.

Superintendent Inglis provided a presentation and an overview of the work that he and his team had been carrying out including how they had dealt with the following four areas:

- Covid over the last 12 months and policing in Wolverhampton and what this has meant
- Performance over the last 12 months
- Digital opportunities
- Challenges moving forward coming out of the pandemic and future expectations.

Superintendent Inglis stated that policing had been second at the table with the Covid journey after Public Health and the NHS and the reality was that this was a medical and clinical incident in the first instance. During the initial phase the police had to adapt quickly to understand their role and what they could bring to the table. The main role at the start appeared to be compliance, where people were interacting with each other and that the police had a really strong role to place in this instance. It then became clear that the police would be getting involved in many areas that they had not encountered before under the new legislation and as the pandemic evolved. The police had attended events such as funerals and in some cases had to ask those in attendance to leave as the numbers were too large, this was a battle of the conscience in some instances, but care was taken to ensure that these situations were handled delicately and with great care. There was very little in police training to prepare staff for these types of events. As new legislation was introduced there was little extra resource and the police had to police in parallel with normal calls for service and new Covid related incidents. There were up to 200 calls each night with people not adhering to Covid rules and these had to be responded to as well as the normal business as usual.

Superintendent Inglis explained that as the updates were provided by the Prime Minister they were heard by the public at the same time as the police so there was no advance notice in changes of legislation which required very quick adaptation. Priorities would then have to be put in place and resources allocated to ensure the new legislation could be enforced. There was a fine line that had to be taken as policing had to be by consent and public trust and support was very important.

There were four key elements in relation to compliance and enforcement in partnership:

- Covid 19 Joint Enforcement Team
- Enhanced Patrol Strategy
- Triage Car
- Enforcement Days

Superintendent Inglis explained that it was also important to support and protect his own staff and to keep them safe so that they could serve the public. This included the

use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) from the very start and wearing masks in cars and offices all of the time. Data was received each day to understand what was taking place with staff and the most staff that were ever off work with Covid related illnesses was 20 which was considered to be very good; at the moment there were no staff off or isolating for Covid related issues.

Superintendent Inglis explained that he had been involved in the closure of one of the first pubs for Covid related reasons, a barber shop and in one case a party linked to a baptism that people from London had travelled to attend.

The biggest asset in Policing was people who, if treated and supported well, were then able to provide a good service to the public and these people had been the top priority throughout the pandemic.

Board members thanked Superintendent Inglis for the initial slides and the information contained within them, stating that it was very interesting to see the situation from the policing side. It was however stated that there had been criticism due to the fact that there appeared to have been little attention to policing outside of the main geographical areas in the City. The question was raised as to whether, if there was a surge again, would more attention be given to these areas or was it just a lack of numbers. Superintendent Inglis stated that the enforcement days had been across the whole of the City and not just in the City centre. Superintendent Inglis agreed that the City Centre appeared more high profile due to the police presence but that the operations had been City wide. Superintendent Inglis stated that all areas were currently over established and that there were more staff than actually allocated and that these officers were being seen on the streets so if there was a surge there could be a focus on key areas as directed by the data and information being received. A considerable amount had been learnt over the last 12 months and should there be another surge then the police would be in a position to respond better and with greater accuracy. A board member stated that there had been raves with 800 to 900 people in attendance in his area and a number of residents had rung the police to complain but were told that there were no police available, this did not help to raise confidence in the police. The process was a two-way process as in order to have confidence in the police, the public needed them to come out to deal with issues when they were reported. Superintendent Inglis stated that he would liaise with the relevant inspector for the area in questions and request that they engage directly with the board member. Another board member stated that given the huge cuts to the police that they, along with the other emergency services had done a fantastic job and that the local team in his area had been outstanding. A request was made in relation to the number and types of crimes that had taken place during the pandemic and what the future now held for policing. Superintendent Inglis thanked the board member for his feedback. Superintendent Inglis provided a slide highlighting the total recorded crime on Wolverhampton Policing Neighbourhood Unit. The data compared the type and amount of recorded crime over the previous year and this year. Areas such as vehicle crime, violence with injury and residential burglary had decreased whilst areas such as domestic abuse and hate crime had increased. In relation to knife crime, Superintendent Inglis stated that he would have liked to have seen this reduce more but the fact that it had now stabilised was an achievement as it had previously been on a much steeper trajectory.

A board member stated that he often referred to the police UK crime site and asked whether this was the correct place to be looking for accurate information in relation to

crime statistics. Superintendent Inglis confirmed that this was the right place. The board member stated that on this site, when comparing crime rates with our neighbours, that Wolverhampton was showing as just below Birmingham as of the end of September 2020 which was worrying given the fact that Wolverhampton was lower in population than many of our neighbours but had a higher general crime rate. Superintendent Inglis stated that yes he would be striving to get Wolverhampton's figures to the bottom of the statistics but was aware that the data on the gov.uk site cut across the last 12 months and suggested that he attend a future meeting of Scrutiny Board to present and compare the relevant data in more detail. The Board agreed that this would be the best way forward.

In relation to digital, Superintendent Inglis explained how the force had used twitter widely to help enforcement and compliance, WM Now which provided up to date information about where you lived and the police partnerships team who had used Teams and Skype to engage with schools and colleges.

Superintendent Inglis presented a video to the Board in relation to the use of drones and crime prevention and detection to help highlight the use of new technology in policing. It was also confirmed that more and more front-line staff had been issued with technology to allow them to work from home when appropriate.

In relation to the year ahead, Superintendent Inglis stated that there would be challenges as the restrictions began to be lifted and that it would remain vital to enforce the regulations whilst also working with the public to maintain trust. In relation to the high time economy opening up there would be an increased demand for normal policing and continuing Covid relating policing but there was also an awareness that officers would want to take some well-earned leave that had previously been put on hold. There would also be challenges in relation to the European Championships, Coventry City of Culture and the Commonwealth Games. On top of this it was important to continue to improve and adapt and reflect and to continue to develop the people in the force so that they could be the best they could.

The Chair welcomed the Community Safety Manager to the meeting to provide an overview of the work of the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership, a statutory board which brought together key partners to tackle crime and disorder, working together to meet the following objectives:

- Reducing Offending
- Preventing Violence
- Harm Reduction
- Building Community Capacity

Throughout the pandemic, the team had been very keen to support the work of commissioned service to ensure that they could continue to work safely and securely. There had been commissioning of targeted youth diversion services and support provided to faith and community groups as well as ongoing engagement with residents. Support had been provided for domestic abuse victims which included a member of the team visiting them at home to carry out an assessment of their property to ensure that it was safe and to enable them to remain at home rather than having to move elsewhere. A place-based approach had been adopted based on data and intelligence and a food bank forum had been set up to help coordinate foodbanks to build capacity and coordinate offers.

The Community Safety Manager referred to hidden crime and that what was reported to the police was not everything that was happening behind closed doors. The following steps were being and had been taken:

- Supporting and running virtual campaigns to raise awareness of hidden crime and ensuring that vulnerable people know how to access the support they need (locally and regionally)
- Ensuring a robust response to domestic abuse working with key partners
- Continued training for professionals
- Supporting contact with the most vulnerable throughout restrictions
- Development of Wolverhampton Exploitation Hub (now live)
- Preparation for the Domestic Abuse Bill (expected implementation April 2021)

The Community Safety Manager stated that moving forward, the team would continue to support communities by:

- Continuing to use a place-based approach to support recovery from Covid-19
- Working with commissioned services to increase face-to-face (when appropriate and safe to do so) contact with the vulnerable whilst maintaining the flexibility that digital communication has enabled
- Enhancing the community spirit built throughout lockdown to continue to build community capacity, resilience and co-produce solutions
- Understanding and responding to emerging trends as restriction's ease
- Working with partners to ensure city response to the Domestic Abuse Bill

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Manager for the presentation.

A board member stated that he had been looking at the Wolverhampton Safer Partnerships website and that it did not appear to be very up to date. The Community Safety Manager stated that she would look into this and ensure that any updates were reflected on the website.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) The Superintendent Inglis be invited to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board to discuss crime rates and statistics.

6 **Adult Education Strategy, Offer and Outcomes**

The Chair welcomed Joanne Keatley, Head of Adult Education to the meeting to present a report on the Adult Education Strategy, Offer and Outcomes. The Chair invited Cllr Dr Mike Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to introduce the report.

Cllr Dr Hardacre explained that the report came to the Board after what had been a very challenging year for adult education which was very much community based. Adult education worked extremely hard with it's partners to seek to upskill the population which would be especially important as we sought to recover from the pandemic. The report made it clear that there had been difficulties and highlighted

the hard work put in by the team to overcome these difficulties. The pandemic had exacerbated the digital divide and issues such as access to a device, access to the internet and digital skills had become more apparent. Many students were now being provided with the internet connectivity that they needed to complete their studies and reach their goals.

The Head of Adult Education provided a presentation to the board that highlighted the main points in the report and a short video that showed learners actually speaking about their learning, what it had enabled them to achieve and how it had impacted their lives.

The pandemic had now impacted on two educational years and the report showed that locally and nationally there were issues in participation in learning itself and in relation to a student's ability to achieve a qualification if they had started their learning prior to lockdown and had to have a break in learning for any reason (including access to equipment). The Head of Adult Education stated that she was immensely proud of her team and their resilience and the amazing job that they had done throughout an extremely difficult time.

It was also explained that in relation to strategy, the aims were aligned with the Council Plan and the aims of the Combined Authority Plan. This included a focus on inclusive growth which led the team to focus on those residents with little or no qualifications or low literacy, numeracy skills or digital skills and those not in work or in work but on a low wage. The report sought to provide some contextual statistics to show how the Wolverhampton statistics had improved but perhaps not as quickly as the national rates. It was stated that the key was to provide the right curriculum to help improve the levels and in ensuring that learners had the means to access that curriculum. The core offer and strengths had to be made available on many levels and there had to be multiple pathways to allow people to join at different levels and work their way through to a qualification in a way that suited them best and was inclusive.

Issues facing residents included large numbers not going online at all, a lack of basic digital skills, a lack of devices and connectivity, not being able to take advantage of offers and information online, not being able to apply for jobs online and not having digital skills for work.

Issues facing employers included accelerated digitalisation of businesses during COVID, businesses needing more digitalisation to survive and difficulty upskilling and recruiting people with the skills needed for now and the future.

A survey of students in lockdown found that 25% didn't have a laptop or a PC and 35% didn't have Wi-Fi at home. Students stated that what would help them would be having a laptop or PC (26%), having a Wi-Fi connection (24%) and having more digital skills (12%).

The response to this had so far included intensive digital skills development frontloaded onto courses, an enhanced loan service for laptops and internet connectivity and a digital transformation plan to continue intensive development. It was noted that at the time of writing, 36% of students had received digital skills development at the start of their course, 64 laptops had been loaned out and 6 MiFi internet connectivity cards had been provided.

The Board welcomed the attendance of the Cabinet Member at the meeting to present the report. A Board Member referred to section 2.3 and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. It was confirmed that this was a fund for 16 to 18-year-old learners and that it had been a challenge to provide to small numbers of 16 to 18-year olds who accessed further education with the department and that going forward there was an intention to provide supported internships for 16 to 25-year olds with an education and health care plan. The board member referred to section 2.6 and the lower than normal response to the survey and whether there was any information in relation to the demographic of the respondents. The Head of Adult Education stated that yes demographics were available and that she would look into this to see if the responses represented the service as a whole but that the response this year had been skewed by the pandemic. The board member also referred to the table at 5.3 and the 21% employed on a low wage and sought confirmation whether it was 21% of the 36% which would have brought the actual figure to around 7.5%. The Head of Adult Education agreed and stated that she would address this moving forward. The board member also considered that we could not compel adults to take part in the process and whether there were issues with our engagement strategy in this regard. Cllr Dr Hardacre agreed that reluctant learners were an ever-present concern and that a lot of work was spent trying to understand how to reach those that were hard to engage with. The Head of Adult Education stated that the service had always met its funding target which meant that it was reaching its objectives regarding this but there was still a question as to whether those people who were being reached were the right ones, but this was an area that was constantly being worked on and participation had increased. Participation had dropped as a result of Covid and it would be a challenge to bring people back and to restore confidence in the process, but the service was good at this and campaigns and case studies would be used to meet the challenge. The board member thanked the Head of Adult Education and Cabinet Member for the responses and congratulated them on the good work that had been carried out.

Resolved:

That the report and the presentation be received.

7 Quarter 2 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report 2020/21

The Chair welcomed the Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager to the meeting to provide an overview of the Quarter Two Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints report for the following areas:

- Corporate
- Children's
- Adults and Public Health
- Ombudsman enquiries

The Council had received 73 stage one corporate complaints; an increase of 38 cases in comparison to 2019/20. These were outlined in Appendix 2. Out of the 73 cases received, 25 were upheld (at fault). The highest figure of 50 complaints received referred to Waste Management and out of 50 received, 22 were upheld which was in comparison to 7 stage one complaints received during quarter two 2019/20. Waste management complaints and service requests had increased during the Covid 19 pandemic restrictions and revised working procedures had impacted on

service delivery. The Complaints Team had worked closely with the service to ensure responses were issued in a timely manner and appropriate remedies were put in place to achieve the best outcomes for customers

If a customer remained dissatisfied they were able to escalate to a stage two complaint. In this period the council had received 5 stage two cases and out of the 5 cases received, two cases had been upheld (at fault) and three cases were not upheld (not at fault).

The Council had received 8 stage one children's services complaints which was a decrease of three cases in comparison to quarter two in 2019/20. Details of these were outlined in Appendix 1 and showed a consistency in numbers to quarter one 2020/21. No stage two or three complaints had been received during this period, 7 cases were closed and resolved during this period, no cases were upheld (at fault), 4 cases were partially upheld (partially at fault) and three cases not upheld (not at fault).

The Council had received 6 stage one adult services complaints and one case for public health. This was a decrease of 5 cases in comparison to quarter two in 2019/20 and details were outlined in Appendix 1. The Council had received one public health complaint for this period in relation to a WV Active Membership fee. It was stated that 6 cases were closed and resolved during this period; two cases were upheld; two cases were partially upheld, and two cases were not upheld.

In relation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman (HO), the Council had received one assessment enquiry from the LGSCO and two assessment enquiries from the HO. The council had received two LGSCO enquiries; one case for Children's Services and one case for Regeneration. In relation to the Children's complaint the outcome had not been upheld and no maladministration was found. In relation to the Regeneration complaint, the Council was still awaiting the outcome and the final report. The council had also received three enquiries from the HO for Wolverhampton Homes. During this period the Ombudsman (LGSCO) had resumed existing casework as they had paused all casework previously which needed input from councils and care providers. The council had also notified customers that they were focusing their attention on addressing the challenges of the pandemic and outlined that complaint deadlines may not be met within the corporate and statutory deadlines.

A total of 87 compliments had also been received.

Resolved: That the report be noted and agreed.