**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 28 JULY 2025 AT 14:00 HOURS –, COUNCIL CHAMBER, DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL,**

# PRESENT: -

Members

Cllr Suky Samra, LLB (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council – Chair)

Cllr Jackie Taylor (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council – Vice Chair)

Cllr Jilly Bermingham (Birmingham City Council)

Cllr Rashad Mahmood (Birmingham City Council)

Cllr Abdul S Khan (Coventry City Council)

Cllr Stuart Henley (Substitute Member for Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council)

Cllr Sardul Marwa MBE, JP (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)

Cllr Richard Holt (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)

Cllr Ram K. Mehmi, MBE (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council)

Adelle Brown (Independent Panel Member)

# ALSO PRESENT: -

Simon Foster – Police and Crime Commissioner

Natalie Queiroz, MBE – Victims’ Advocate, Office for Police and Crime Commissioner

Simon Down – Head of Policy, Office for Police and Crime Commissioner

Ellie Parsonage – Policy Officer – Office for Police and Crime Commissioner

Chief Superintendent Richard North – West Midlands Police

Chief Inspector Sara Beech – West Midlands Police

Tom Senior – Lead Officer (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council)

Sarah Fradgley – Overview & Scrutiny Manager (Birmingham City Council)

Sam Yarnall – Interim Scrutiny Officer (Birmingham City Council)

# 889 NOTICE OF RECORDING

# The Lead Panel Officer announced the meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast and members of the press/public may record the meeting. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

# 890 APOLOGIES

There were apologies tendered on behalf of Cllrs Alex Dale, with Cllr Stuart Henley acting as substitute, and Izzy Knowles. There were apologies from Independent Panel Members Ravinderjit Briah and Amy Mullins-Downes.

**891 ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 2025/26**

The Lead Panel Officer asked for nominations for the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel for the 2025/26 Municipal Year. Cllr Suky Samra, LLB of Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council was nominated. There were no further nominations, and it was voted unanimously that Cllr Suky Samra, LLB would be Chair for the Municipal Year. Following the vote, Cllr Suky Samra, LLB Chaired the remainder of the meeting.

**RESOLVED –** That Suky Samra, LLB be elected as Chair of the Police and Crime Panel for the period ending with the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel AGM in 2026.

**892 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 2025/26**

The Chair asked for nominations for the Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel for the 2025/26 Municipal Year. Cllr Jackie Taylor of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council was nominated. There were no further nominations, and it was voted unanimously that Cllr Jackie Taylor would be Vice Chair for the Municipal Year and would deputise in the event that the Chair was unable to attend the meeting.

**RESOLVED -** That Cllr Jackie Taylor be elected as Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel for the period ending with the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel AGM in 2026.

# 893 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair reminded Members to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests on any items of business at the meeting. There were no interests tendered at the meeting.

**894 POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MEMBERSHIP 2025/26**

**RESOLVED** – that the Membership of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel for the 2025/26 Municipal Year, be noted.

**895 ACTION TRACKER**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager presented the Action Tracker and provide an update on the outstanding actions. She noted that there had been progress with the financial support that Members received regarding the Policing Precept. Members had no comments on the action tracker and noted the completed actions which included the finance support and an update on Neighbourhood Policing.

**RESOLVED –** that the actions, which included an update on the Finance Support and Neighbourhood Policing, be noted.

**896 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions submitted to the Panel that met the criteria that could be asked at the meeting; there were no further questions or comments at the meeting.

**897 PANEL ARRANGEMENTS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager provided an update to the Panel on the arrangements of the Panel as well as its rules of procedure. This was an annual report that detailed the procedures and remit of the Panel. Members did not ask any follow-up questions.

**RESOLVED –** that:

1. The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Arrangements for 2025/2026, be endorsed by the Panel; and
2. The West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Rules of Procedures for 2025/2026, be endorsed by the Panel.

**898 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL EXPENDITURE 2024-25 AND BUDGET 2025-26**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager provided the update on the Panel’s expenditure for 2024-25 as well as their budget for 2025-26. This was an annual report that broke down the allocated grant for the year from the Home Office as well as the breakdown of the previous year’s expenditure. The expenditure for the previous year totalled to £66,952.44. Members had no further questions.

 **RESOLVED –** that the expenditure for 2024-25 and forecast expenditure for 2025-26 associated with the administration of the Panel, be noted.

**898 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER INTRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Police and Crime Commissioner introduced himself to the newly confirmed Panel, outlining his priorities following re-election in May 2024. He shared highlights from his 45-year career in criminal justice and emphasised the new Police and Crime Plan’s focus on creating a safer West Midlands. This introduction linked the Panel’s scrutiny role with the Commissioner’s responsibilities, as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act.

A performance update was presented by the Commissioner and the OPCC Head of Policy, covering key initiatives such as lobbying to retain fixed penalty notices for reinvestment into road safety, updates on Operation Fearless in Erdington, and Operation SNAP, which included over 25,000 registered domestic CCTV and doorbell cameras. The Commissioner further highlighted his efforts to support the Victims’ Code and enhance public safety.

An additional £12.2 million investment in Neighbourhood Policing was announced, pending confirmation after the Government Spending Review in September 2025. The Commissioner also highlighted the Community Fund and his involvement in judging the West Midlands Outstanding Citizen Awards.

The Head of Policy provided strategic performance insights using RAG ratings to monitor progress against the Police and Crime Plan. He advised that 9 areas were currently rated ‘RED’ and required senior leadership intervention. Crime data showed an 18.6% rise in sexual offences (a national trend), improved prosecution outcomes, and an 18% drop in road safety offences (Jan–July 2025 vs. previous year). Work was ongoing to refine Key Performance Indicators.

Finally, Members were informed of efforts to build public trust, with West Midlands Police recognised nationally for rapid response times—averaging under 3 seconds for 999 calls and 3 minutes for 101 calls. Continued work was underway to promote fairness and confidence in policing across the region and a Trust and Confidence Survey was being developed.

 Following the updates from the Commissioner and his Officers, Members had the opportunity to ask him questions based on what was presented:

* Members asked for further information on Neighbourhood Policing and the deployment of the officers. The Commissioner explained that the Government announced provisional funding settlement of £100 million was to increase neighbourhood policing across the UK. For West Midlands, this was explained as an increase in both PCSOs and Police Officers.
* The Chair asked a follow-up on when the recruiting and the new Police Officers would be seen on the ground by residents. The Commissioner and Chief Superintendent North explained that there were practical factors to be considered including training. This was said to take time but highlighted that mid-September was when progress was expected to be seen with the introduction of the Neighbourhood teams.
* The Chair asked about the force’s confidence in its ability to attract recruits and retention of staff and whether in comparison how the West Midlands Police Force faired. The Chief Superintendent explained that there was a good record of recruiting Officers to West Midlands Police. The Commissioner further added that in comparison to other policing areas, West Midlands Police was at the same levels of retention when it came to new recruits.
* Members raised concerns about Neighbourhood Policing, road safety, and public trust, questioning whether the recruitment of 20 new PCSOs was sufficient. The Commissioner acknowledged it was a limited start due to central government funding. A 5% drop in crime reporting was also discussed with the Commissioner agreeing to provide further data on recording practices. On road safety, he highlighted ongoing investment and the potential benefits of retaining fixed penalty revenues to fund deterrents like speed awareness courses, mobile speed vans, and CCTV. He reiterated West Midlands Police’s leading response times for 999 and 101 calls as a sign of improving public confidence. The Head of Policy added that £6.7 million had been invested in victims’ access rights across the force.
* Members commented on the Offending to Recovery Initiative from the Commissioner’s Office and asked about the budget and its impact on crime like shoplifting as well as the numbers of people that sought support. The Commissioner highlighted that it was an effective project that started in Birmingham and that with additional funding there would be initiatives across the West Midlands. He also explained that this was a good method of tackling the causes of crime. The Head of Policy agreed to provide further information that was requested.
* Members asked a follow-up on the budget of these schemes. The Commissioner responded that funding was linked in with the health service as a joint approach. There was also discussion of funding from retailers to support the scheme. The Commissioner mentioned receiving funding from the Co-operative and had hosted a round table event at Lloyd House with retailers to seek wider engagement with the scheme.
* Members enquired about how the Commissioner and his team were working to address the perception of receiving treatment. The Commissioner replied that there was work to address the perception of seeking and receiving treatment. The Office was operating with outreach teams to support this. The partnership work was said to be important as it tackled perception and provided support for those that needed.
* Members also acknowledged that the rehabilitation support and the weapon surrender stations had tackled several types of crimes. The Commissioner further added that it addressed serious crimes that spread across county lines.
* Members highlighted that the report presented to them had a lot of figures but little information to explain the data. The Chair presented some figures from the report including, 2500 reported additional usage of dash cam footage that led to a 4% prosecution rate of road safety offences.
* Members asked about road safety and the levels of feedback on reporting and its impact on trust and confidence in the police. The Commissioner highlighted that one fatality in response to road traffic/safety offences was one too many. It was highlighted that this was a topic of interest for the PCC’s Accountability and Governance Board and that there had been a 18% reduction of people killed on the roads. The Commissioner was happy to provide further information to the Panel. There was a discussion on OPS SNAP and how it has supported with reporting road traffic offences and Community Speed Watch had been integral to this.
* Members commented on the speed cameras for the neighbourhood teams and their deployment. The Commissioner explained that this was based on enforcement activity and where they are needed to tackle offending.
* Members commented on the lobby from the Commissioner to retain the fixed penalty notices and asked on how they could support it as elected members. The Commissioner said that they would be able to share this information.

Following Member questions, the Panel agreed the recommendations as detailed in the report.

**RESOLVED** – that:

1. The recent activity by the Police and Crime Commissioner, be noted; and
2. The update from the Police and Crime Commissioner on how he holds the West Midlands Police Force to account for the delivery of the Police and Crime Plan objectives, be noted.
3. The Panel agreed to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to the format and the breakdown of the performance data, be noted.
4. The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to provide further information on the resources for the Offending to Recovery Initiative, be noted.
5. The Police and Crime Commissioner agreed to provide further information on his campaign to retain fixed penalty notice charges in relation to road safety, be noted.

**899 VICTIMS’ ADVOCATE**

Members received an introduction and update from the newly appointed Victims’ Advocate, Natalie Queiroz, MBE, on their role and their work over the last 90 days since being appointed. The Victims’ Advocate discussed their journey as a previous victim to give the Panel insight of how life experience had supported her in the role. This illustrated the journey of a victim as well as their understanding of the Victims’ Code established in 2006 with 12 fundamental rights for a victim of crime to access to the criminal justice system and be heard and supported.

In their first 90 days, the Victims’ Advocate had started building relationships with senior officials, visited key teams such as the Public Protection Unit and analysed the current timeline and journey of victims. They also met providers of commissioned victims’ services and Criminal Justice Partner agencies to understand their work and encourage greater integration across services for victims. Members were also informed of the casework she was conducted and the relationships she had built with MPs, Ministers, and Commissioners across the country to better support victims and the visibility of the West Midlands in supporting victims nationally. Following the update, Members asked the following questions:

* Members thanked the Victims’ Advocate for sharing her story as well as the work that she had done.
* Members asked about the length of time it would take for an offender to be charged. The Victims’ Advocate and Chief Superintendent, Richard North, highlighted that the timeline was an ongoing process between the Police and the CPS. Each of the cases were said to be taken as they are received and looked at the risk to the community and victim leading to discussion on how it was difficult to provide a general statement as a result.
* Members noted the emotional impact on victims when court dates were rearranged and whether the was further support for victims in these cases. The Victims’ Advocate highlighted that this was a core issue that was being examined by the Government. Members were informed of the recommendations from the Leveson report to make the processes of the courts quicker. The Commissioner further supported the points made by Members and the Victims’ Advocate by discussing a further £6.6 million of victim support services. He further added that there was further work needed to embed the Victims Code in all elements of the Criminal Justice System and the Victims and Prisons Act had granted Police and Crime Commissioner’s increased powers to review compliance with the Code.
* Members commented on signposting for victim support and welcomed this.
* There were comments on men that experienced domestic abuse and mental health and the support services for them. It was commented that the support services for men who had experience domestic abuse was not as signposted and whether there was further work into this. The Victims’ Advocate highlighted of support services for men’s mental health. This included the Ask Mark service delivered by Black Country Aid. This dedicated male support service was to support the mental health of men that had experienced domestic abuse. This included addressing the stigma of being a victim and seeking support. The Commissioner further added that there were services in the process of being commissioned that were dedicated to supporting male victims.
* Members asked about a greater victim’s aide for the journey/timeline of a victim’s journey and its impact on the criminal justice process. The Victims’ Advocate acknowledged the comment and noted that the journey for a victim varies due to the nature of the system. It was noted that the balance between support and bringing offenders to just was difficult. In terms of ensuring that the Police were keeping victims apprised of developments, it was their role as Victims’ Advocate to keep the Police accountable to that.
* The Victims’ Advocate asked about the make-up of their team and if there were any male members of staff to support the development of men victim advocacy. The Victims’ Advocate explained that the team looked to support victims of all demographics. The Head of Policy explained that it was a five-member team that comprised of a manager and four policy officers. Whilst the team was largely female, it was noted that there was work with victims and stakeholders to ensure that the work accounted for demographics of the West Midlands.
* Members asked about the Criminal Justice Board and its ability to hold the criminal justice system to account for not meeting the needs of the Victims Code. It was asked about extra scrutiny to this in relation to the impact on victims as well as any inspectorates that would examine the framework of the Board. The Commissioner responded by detailing information from the performance update and the work under the Police and Crime Plan and his priorities as Chair of the local Criminal Justice Board. This detailed the further development of the Victims Code into the work of the Criminal Justice Board. This was to improve transparency and hold the police accountable to their actions. The Victims’ Advocate further added that there was work with the Ministry of Justice to look at this across the system and the nation. The was to ensure that all partners recognised victims and ensured that they were supported and if not that there should be mandated penalties. The Ministry of Justice was still to develop specific metrics that would be reported and these were not expected to be in place until 2027, work was underway to agree locally what would be measured in the interim.
* Members commented that there were many victims that had not received justice and that there should be further support for them in these cases. The Victims’ Advocate echoed the comments and would not want people to be in those positions.

Following questions and comments from Members, the Chair thanked the Victims’ Advocate and Officers for presenting to the Panel and welcomed a further update in the future. Members agreed the recommendations in the report.

**RESOLVED –** that the contents of the report, be noted by the Panel.

*Cllr R Mahmood left at 3.17pm*

**900 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL WORK PROGRAMME 2025/2026**

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager provided an update on the work programme for the 2025/2026 Municipal year to the Panel. This included taking a thematic approach to the work programme of the Panel that matched elements of the Police and Crime Plan. Members agreed that the next meeting in September would focus on Neighbourhood Policing and that Officers would work with the Chair and Vice Chair to prioritise items for the rest of the year.

**RESOLVED –** That:

1. The work programme and menu of priority topics in Appendix A, were reviewed by the Panel.
2. the Panel programme Neighbourhood Policing for its September 2025 meeting; and the Chair and Vice-Chair consider the items for November 2025.

**901 MEETING DATES FOR 2025/2026**

**RESOLVED –** that the meeting dates for the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year be agreed.

*Cllr A S Khan left the meeting at 4.39pm*

**902 URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no further urgent business discussed at the meeting.

Meeting closed: 16.53 hours.

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CHAIR