



Accountability and Governance Board 22 October 2024

Minutes of Meeting

These minutes provide a summary of key points raised during the meeting.

1	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Alethea Fuller (Deputy Chief Executive) Andrea Gabbitas (Head of Business Services) Helen Davis (Assistant Director – IT & Digital) Jane Heppel (Chief Finance Officer) Jonathan Jardine (Chief Executive) Pete Gillett (Director of Commercial Services) Sam Ridding (Head of Professional Standards Department) Scott Green (Deputy Chief Constable) Simon Foster (Police and Crime Commissioner) Wasim Ali (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner)</p>
	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Constable Craig Guildford• Alethea Fuller• Jane Heppel
2	<p>Notes of last meeting</p> <p>The notes of the last meeting were approved by attendees.</p>
3	<p>PCC Update</p> <p>The Commissioner provided a general update which covered the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">I. The PCC will be issuing his second Police and Crime Plan (PCP), which will cover the period 2025-29. The PCP consultation closed in mid-October 2024. Some of the matters raised include: an emphasis to improve community and engagement; tackling VAWG and; protecting vulnerable people.II. On 3rd October the PCC was visited by Jess Philips MP and Lord Timpson regarding delivering the intensive supervision court model. This will break the cycle of time, save taxpayers money and allow women within the CJS to make a positive contribution to society.III. National hate crime awareness week ran from 12th to 19th October. Hate crime will not be tolerated in the West Midlands. The PCC is continuing to invest in the rights

	<p>and welfare of victims. The investment means that victims will have access to dedicated victim support services.</p> <p>IV. The PCC joined the Force in OP Hercules to tackle dangerous driving and street racing. This is a top priority for the PCC; illegal street racing will not be tolerated in the West Midlands.</p> <p>V. On 18th October, the PCC opened the VRP annual conference 2024. The VRP is an integral part of the strategy, embodying 3 key themes: intervention, partnership and rehabilitation. Funding for VRP is due to end in 2025, however, the PCC will continue to advocate for funding for the VRP.</p>
4	<p>Deputy Chief Constable Update</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Constable provided a general update which covered the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The Force remains engaged with the national recovery plan following summer disorder and is continuing to monitor tension across communities. II. HMIC engagement has ceased, with 1 remaining cause of concern which is use of outcomes and codes. By the end of the performance year, there will be 12 months of auditing data. Restructures are taking place at the crime desk. III. This remains a busy time for policing moving into the autumnal phase of the year. The football season is back, which impacts the Force operationally. That said, 999 and 101 performance remain within the top quartile nationally. IV. Outcomes for crime continue to increase and crime continues to fall. Robbery is being reduced by 10% with an outcome rate of 15%.
5	<p>Questions from AGB members</p> <p>The following questions were asked of the Deputy Chief Constable:</p> <p>Question 1: Retail Crime (Asked by DPCC Wasim Ali)</p> <p>“Given the significant increase in police recorded retail crime over the previous 12 months, not only within the West Midlands, but across the country:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) What factors have been driving this increase; (2) What steps have West Midlands Police been taking whether locally, regionally or nationally, to prevent and tackle this, whether by disruption and enforcement or by working with retailers and other partners? (3) What more needs to be done to prevent and tackle retail crime?” <p><i>Response:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. <i>There has been a sharp increase in reported retail crime in the West Midlands and nationally. Only an estimated 42% of all retail crime is reported to police.</i> II. <i>There are a number of contributions to the increase, including: the cost of living crisis, availability of goods within stores and other external factors. The new LPA operating model means officers are attending more shop lifting offences. This is consequently encouraging shop owners to report crimes.</i> III. <i>Communities are becoming more confident in that it is being reported locally and responded to quickly.</i>

	<p>IV. <i>Prison capacity is at maximum. While it is not a policing role to comment on criminal justice outcomes, it is the case that many of those convicted for shop lifting offences will not be given a custodial sentence. Alternative outcomes advocated by the PCC are a positive alternative.</i></p> <p>V. <i>The Force are focussing on attendance times to ensure that the grade is right when there is an offender detained within the store and because actions within the first few hours of offending massively impact outcomes. Investigations are relatively straightforward due to availability of CCTV, witnesses, etc.</i></p> <p>VI. <i>Retail crime/shoplifting is treated much more seriously than it was 18 months to 2 years ago.</i></p> <p>VII. <i>Shoplifting is a standard agenda item at the Force's performance day. Recording levels have now plateaued. Encourage the public, shopworkers, store owners and store managers to report incidents.</i></p> <p>VIII. <i>Data indicates that serious and organised crime is not a driving factor behind the increase in shoplifting.</i></p> <p>IX. <i>The discrepancy in positive outcome rates across the Force is being addressed. It is largely attributed to different levels of innovation by local authorities working in conjunction with the Force and PCC, leading to better positive outcome rates.</i></p> <p>Question 2: Zombie Knives (Asked by PCC Simon Foster)</p> <p>The Home Office operated a Surrender and Compensation Scheme ('the Scheme') from 26 August – 23 September 2024, ahead of a ban on 'Zombie-style' knives and 'Zombie-style' machetes. We understand that, pursuant to the Scheme, the Force designated various police stations for the handover of weapons and claims for compensation. Can the Deputy Chief Constable provide an update on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The total number of 'Zombie-style' knives and 'Zombie-style' machetes handed into designated WMP Police Stations, pursuant to the terms of the Scheme? 2. How many of the total number of 'Zombie-style' knives and 'Zombie-style' machetes handed into designated WMP Police Stations, pursuant to the terms of the Scheme, included a claim for compensation and if so, for how much? 3. Has there been any learning for WMP arising from the operation of the Scheme and have there been any wider benefits for WMP or the West Midlands arising from the Scheme? <p><i>Response:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. <i>During the Home Office scheme, a total of 214 knives and machetes were surrendered. 168 of these qualify as zombie knives.</i> II. <i>107 of the 214 were surrendered by members of the public walking into public offices.</i> III. <i>Only 20 surrender weapons are subject to a compensation claim. Total compensation stands at just over £3,600.</i> IV. <i>Contact centre staff will receive very specific training.</i>
6	<p>Medium Term Financial Plan</p> <p>This item was presented by Pete Gillett, Director of Commercial Services. The following discussion took place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Page 1 paragraph 7 details the impact of the pay award for officers and staff. To what extent does the grant from the Home Office cover costs that will be incurred?

	<p>Rather than use the conventional formula grant methodology, the Force did budget for 2.5% for the pay award, anything above the 2.5% was covered by Home Office grant.</p> <p>II. Page 2, paragraph 7, point 6 references the requirement for the Force to maintain a head count of 8,009 officers. To what extent does the requirement to maintain those officers to receive the uplift grant constrain operational choices?</p> <p>The more resources available to the Force, the safer they can keep communities.</p> <p>III. Page 2 paragraph 10 refers to the £10 million underspend. To what extent has the underspend arisen from lack of officer numbers or a reduction in other policing services? What impact will this have on frontline policing?</p> <p>The Force will always aim to minimize the impact on frontline services. Salary savings have been made in police staff areas. There are currently police staff vacancies.</p> <p>IV. Which of the sensitivity analysis risks which are of greater concern?</p> <p>The Force have tried to be open with the level of wider risks that they face. Some external financial scenarios have a significant impact, such as inflation. Those areas are stabilising now, and a reduction in cost is being observed. The Force must be aware of what the potential level of grant funding could be in future, as well as the impact of a rise in national insurance. The reserves table will provide some assurance.</p> <p>V. How will the capital receipts be invested at £65 million?</p> <p>Capital receipts have traditionally been used to support the capital programme, the estates strategy and any future environmental investment. This gives the Force a perfect opportunity to move into an annual detailed budget setting.</p> <p>VI. Pension contributions would be subject to national insurance, what would the implications be of this?</p> <p>National insurance on pension contributions would be around £20 million. This represents an additional pressure and will be kept under very close review. The Force aim to have the right balance of contributions from reserves and financial savings.</p> <p>VII. How much do the county lines, grip and uplift grant support the uplift in 25/26? What would the impact be of removing those grants?</p> <p>County lines is £7 million and grip is around £2.5 to £3 million. The uplift is around £4 million. Hoping that further clarity on the settlement will be provided later in 2024. The Force should know in December what the position is regarding these grants.</p> <p>As a region, the West Midlands is net internal mover and net exporter of county lines. The Chief Officer Team have considered, if the funding stops, how this will still be tackled operationally.</p> <p>VIII. With reference to maintaining PCSOs at 300 full time equivalent. At one-point WMP had 800 PCSOs - what the optimum level of PCSOs</p> <p>The DCC agrees that PCSOs are at the forefront of neighbourhood policing. The Force is undergoing an exercise in defining the totality of resource in neighbourhood policing. There may be a defined number, then the Force can assess if it is met.</p>
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	<p>The PCC has attended various residents' meetings. Lots of feedback indicates that the public overwhelmingly value community policing. If it were a choice for them, they would like to see community policing rebuilt and resourced.</p> <p>IX. There is a reflection within the report around operational risks and a reference to our most similar force, GMP. When West Midlands MPs were briefed at C3 in September, the opportunity cost of fewer officers per 100,000 of the population was explored. What could the Force achieve if we had the same level of officers per 100,000 as GMP?</p> <p>In the West Midlands, 7 LPAs are each headed by a Superintendent and Chief Inspectors manage the key functions. In Manchester, this is structured differently, with 3 Superintendents per district. They have £30 million more than WMP and less people to police.</p> <p>X. What is the timetable for exploring the options identified in the report and those options to bring the budget back into balance for the medium term?</p> <p>The timeline is well underway; the finance team and other colleagues are working with operational and enabling teams to look at saving opportunities, and the DCC will be chairing a series of priority-based budgeting meetings. There may be additional investment in some of the Force priority areas. Estates strategy will be at the heart of how the Force operates.</p> <p>XI. The projected growth in income is set at 1%. Given the focus on sound financial management, this feels light? Is that really the best we can do?</p> <p>The MTFP provides the framework against which the budgets will be set. Charges for other forces tend to rise by inflation. Annual budgets will have a higher level of ambition.</p> <p>XII. What is the assessment of the sensitivity around the IT programme and how do we ensure projections are in line with what the necessary investment is?</p> <p>The IT and D function is part of the strategy. A new financial governance board has been launched. Strategically, the Force has to place technology at the heart of what they are doing. The necessary elements to invest are the ones that are well sighted on. The right level of investment in replacement programmes is required. Boarder oversight from financial governance board is useful.</p> <p>XIII. Is it possible to provide an update with regards to the costings of the PCC commissioned carbon trust project?</p> <p>This is underway. The Force are happy to bring further details forward as it develops.</p> <p>XIV. What is the ongoing commitment to the national living wage rates?</p> <p>This is a commitment for the Force moving forward, although every annual budget setting cycle requires scrutiny of this position.</p> <p>XV. Would it be possible to provide some detail with regards to IT and Digital strategy from a financial investment perspective?</p> <p>Forecast capital commitments are based on information the Force receive at the time on each area.</p>
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	<p>XVI. Is delivery of the estates strategy important to the MTFP?</p> <p>The Strategy is important to the deliver of the MTFP. The Force need to ensure that the estate represents conditions to work in the best, most efficient way. The goal is to minimise borrowing wherever possible. To sustain that financial position, tackling receipts responsibly is the right thing to do.</p>
7	<p>IT & Digital Strategy</p> <p>This item was presented by Helen Davis, Director of IT&Digital. The following discussion took place:</p> <p>I. During a 2 month trial of Andi-Esra, a number of calls were sent through to contact agents in a time sensitive way. How have contact staff adapted to prioritisation of calls by Andi-Esra?</p> <p>Andi-Esra rightly triaged some 101 calls into the 999 queue. It also allowed contact handlers to focus on calls which require human interaction. It's not giving the public a lesser service, instead it ensuring call handlers have more time to speak to people who need it.</p> <p>II. Are there any specific criteria to identify vulnerable callers? Is it effective?</p> <p>Andi-Esra operates on a key-word basis. If a key word is said, it will then put the caller through to a 101 call handler. If it doesn't understand, it will put them through to a 101 call handler. Andi-Esra will continuously improve.</p> <p>III. Police officers now rely on a digital pocket notebook which has replaced the paper-based notebook. How does the digital pocket notebook integrate with other systems, what is the impact on data entry?</p> <p>All apps are compatible with any media device. The electronic notebook will then update systems, reducing duplication of work. Feedback has been really positive regarding the notebook.</p> <p>IV. Have there been any security concerns since the pocket notebook was implemented?</p> <p>There have been no security concerns raised since it was implemented. In fact, it is deemed safer.</p> <p>V. Are there any measures to ensure that officers are fully utilising further advanced technology?</p> <p>When officers complete a sketch of the scene, they can do it with a stylus or with their finger. We know how many officers are using this facility. For those that aren't using it, the Force will ask them why.</p> <p>VI. How is the Force progressing with regards to AI initiatives?</p> <p>The Home Office have stated it should be cloud compatible by 2030. There is a dual cloud capability which will help with pricing. AI needs to offer a tangible benefit to the Force. It cannot simply be used because it is attractive. Andi-Esra was fully approved by the Ethics Committee. Any new technology goes through a very rigorous security assessment. In terms of cyber security, the Force is as prepared as it can be for any threat.</p>

	<p>VII. What is an example of successful collaboration so far, what further developments are happening?</p> <p>The Force are currently looking to work with T-Tech, a US based company with a UK presence, regarding transcription services. The Force and Vodaphone currently have a strong relationship also, and the Force will be looking to obtain discounts on Vodaphone products moving forward.</p> <p>VIII. What are the top 3 technology priorities for the Force in the next 12 months and how will these enhance operational capability?</p> <p>There is a consideration regarding the user experience, with the Force having invested a lot of money in the past 3-5 years. Small changes are favoured, as opposed to radical changes.</p> <p>IX. Have any measurable improvements been observed in terms of the time it takes for members of the public to upload CCTV footage?</p> <p>Feedback has been received, but a lot of it is anecdotal. It was challenging to facilitate this.</p> <p>X. How has the rollout of laptops impacted productivity?</p> <p>All response officers and the majority of neighbourhood officers now have a laptop. Most Force systems can be accessed via a laptop. Feedback from LPA commanders is that fewer people are working from the police stations.</p> <p>Laptops are fitted with a Vodaphone SIM and are able to connect anywhere. Each response vehicle has a charging unit, which some officers believe is not efficient enough.</p> <p>XI. Is training still an issue for digital capabilities? To what extent is this strategy appropriately linked to training requirements?</p> <p>Connect went live several years ago on the belief that it was straightforward to use. However, this was not the case, therefore training is being started with a new version of Connect that will go live soon. With regards to the introduction of mobile apps, they are tested for robustness prior to launch.</p> <p>XII. Where are opportunities and risk associated with the rest of the CJS?</p> <p>The Force are mindful to not purchase something that the CJS cannot work with. Currently looking to see if the Force can assist colleagues in the CJS with case, file, build.</p> <p>XIII. There is national move around more collaboration between forces. Is this an opportunity or a risk for the strategy?</p> <p>This is an opportunity. There is a regional collaboration group which sits with ACC Welsted. The Force are also the central hub for robotic automation, hosted 11 forces to date to showcase how robotic automations are carried out.</p> <p>XIV. Could you explain how ACRO automation has improved compliance with international agreements on data sharing?</p>
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	<p>ACRO is a basic robot which makes processes quicker and reduces the human element before it is submitted at a high level.</p> <p>XV. What can we expect from the refresh of the strategy in 2025 and what consultations will take place?</p> <p>Jane Heppel has already been involved in the strategy and will be signed off by Pete Gillett and Force Exec before implementation.</p>
8a	<p>Professional Standards, Complaints and Conduct</p> <p>This item was presented by Chief Superintendent Sam Ridding, Head of Professional Standards Department, the following discussion took place:</p> <p>I. The biggest challenge faced by PSD is demand, complaints, vetting and conduct. How is this being tackled?</p> <p>High profile cases have rightly alerted the public to police misconduct, which gives individuals the confidence to come forward. The prevention and intervention team have clarified with colleagues which behaviour is acceptable, and which isn't. For instance, it's been made clear that banter is unacceptable. There has been a significant uplift of staff, with over 35 staff being recruited into PSD over 3 years.</p> <p>II. Paragraph 16 observes there's been no change in the numbers or the most common theme of complaints submitted by the public over 3 years. What is the evidence of wider force learning?</p> <p>Areas of concern by HMIC related to victims contact and victims code. Work has been undertaken with regards to training. The Force are much better at recording allegations. Learning from HMIC and work undertaken by the IOPC show the Force is recording more complaints.</p> <p>III. The national Crimestoppers anti-corruption line went live in March 2024. How does the hotline operate and what impact has it had so far on the Force?</p> <p>Out of the 83 matters raised via the anti-corruption line, only 23 matters relate to corruption. If a referral was made regarding someone within West Midlands Police PSD, it would be dealt with by Staffordshire Police on behalf of the Force. Others matters raised are dealt with via misconduct investigation.</p> <p>IV. Given the high number of vetting reviews and rejection of some transferees, how is the Force ensuring that these processes are thorough, without delaying recruitment efforts?</p> <p>Vetting has been challenging with the Force continuing to recruit large numbers of police officers. The vetting processes are rigorous, vetting standards are not dropped to save time. Will look to reduce the RV and MV vetting times, it is one of the recommendations being looked at to change the number of years at which these require review.</p> <p>V. What is the public perception of the number of accelerated misconduct hearings?</p>

	<p>Accelerated hearings take place where there is overwhelming evidence that the officer should be removed from duty. Legal Services has also has identified further opportunities for accelerated misconduct hearings. There has not been a hearing held yet under the new Regulations. New Legally Qualified Persons and Independent Panel Members have vast amounts of experience.</p> <p>VI. Has there been any noted increase in the proportion of appeals with regards to accelerated misconduct hearings?</p> <p>There has only been 1 appeal.</p> <p>VII. How prepared is the Force with regards to training ACCs chairing misconduct panels? Is this having an impact on ACCs and are there any other issues arising from the transition to the new model? Are we seeing an increase in appeals related to misconduct hearings?</p> <p>The CC, DCC and ACCs have been trained on the new Regulations. In a much stronger position in the West Midlands as the Force has 5 ACCs. The new Regulations allow for the Legally Qualified Person (LQP) to prepare the hearing outcome report on behalf of the chair. There are no significant concerns as the Force's ACCs are experienced and understand why this process is important.</p> <p>VIII. Will there be an expectation for further training for ACCs in their new roles?</p> <p>This is a developing matter that the Chief Constable will be sighted on.</p> <p>IX. Will the ACC or the LQP be preparing the report in the West Midlands?</p> <p>Regional approach is that the LQP will be writing the report.</p> <p>X. Two risk areas have received attention. Firstly, the way in which sex workers can report people who they believe is a police officer. Secondly, if a police officer is a perpetrator of domestic abuse in the home. What special mechanisms are in place for these circumstances?</p> <p>Regarding sex workers, the Force has worked with third sector agencies to facilitate reporting. Police officer domestic abuse was subject to a super complaint. The PPU have established processes re investigating police perpetrated domestic abuse. The Force is also working on creating an internal mechanism to report police perpetrated domestic abuse. Training will take place with colleagues at the end of November. The internal reporting line should go live before Christmas.</p> <p>XI. What are the main reasons for upheld reviews?</p> <p>Reviews are upheld when the reviewing officer believes there has not been a reasonable and proportionate investigation into the complaint. This may be because allegations were not addressed. Learning arising from reviews has been taken on board. Some members of the public are repetitive complainants and no remedy is able to satisfy them.</p> <p>XII. Is it the case that lack of updates to victims is not the only area of dissatisfaction re investigations?</p> <p>This is definitely the case, occasionally individuals' expectations are not managed appropriately.</p>
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	<p>XIII. Has any feedback been received regarding the 100 volunteer standards ambassadors and the new integrity unit?</p> <p>The Force are pleased with the standards ambassadors, who are volunteers making a real difference. A CPD conference is held with standards ambassadors, who act as a focus group. The Integrity Unit's work primarily comes from flags arising from re-vetting.</p> <p>XIV. There is an increase in the number of officers suspended from duty pending investigations. Given the cost to the public purse, what is considered before deciding to suspend an officer?</p> <p>Each case is taken on its own merit. Where an officer is under investigation for violent or sexual criminal offences then they would likely be suspended. Suspensions are made with the public interest in heart. Suspension review meetings take place on a monthly basis to ensure they are still correct.</p> <p>XV. What steps are being taken to address staffing numbers and other matters arising from HMICFRS findings?</p> <p>Lots of additional staff training has been undertaken, a Centurion software manual has been made and 6 additional resources have been onboarded into the investigations section of the department.</p>
8b	<p>Complaints and Reviews</p> <p>This item was presented by Andrea Gabbitas, Head of Business Services. The following discussion took place:</p> <p>I. What factors contribute to the 20 working days review response time? Are there any ongoing initiatives to reduce this response time?</p> <p>West Midlands are significantly quicker when compared to other forces. It is unlikely that the response time would be reduced much lower than 20 working days as a high quality response to the complainant is prioritised.</p> <p>II. Two pension forfeiture decisions are pending for officers convicted of serious criminal offences. What is the process used in determining pension forfeitures and how does this process contribute to trust and confidence in the Force?</p> <p>Pension forfeitures are only considered in the most serious of cases. It must be a crime committed in connection with duty as a police officer. Professional Standards Department will present pension forfeiture recommendations to the PCC. The PCC will then make an initial assessment to ensure the basic criteria is met. The Home Office will then grant a certificate for pension forfeitures. In terms of how much, or when the forfeiture is made, this is a decision down exclusively to the Police and Crime Commissioner. There is national work ongoing to provide guidance around pension forfeitures.</p> <p>III. 19 recommendations have been made to the Force this year, with 3 complainants yet to receive a response. How is this followed up?</p> <p>There is a discussion with PSD before recommendations are made. All recommendations have been accepted. Continual discussions are held to ensure remedies following recommendations are carried out. With reference to the 3 upheld reviews, it seems as though the update has not yet been provided to the complainant.</p>

	<p>IV. Has Operation Vanguard had any impact?</p> <p>CRM thinks that there have been improvements, for instance with officers making greater efforts to explain the outcome to complainants following investigations. Op Vanguard has had an impact.</p>
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