

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

Agenda

West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

**Thursday, 27 July 2023, 11.00 am
County Hall, Worcester**

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West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
Thursday, 27 July 2023, 11.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Membership:

Cllr Barry Durkin Chairman)	(Vice Substantive Member - Herefordshire Council
Cllr Rob Adams	Substantive Member - Wychavon District Council
Cllr Martin Allen	Substantive Member - Malvern Hills District Council
Cllr Joanne Beecham	Substantive member - Redditch Borough Council
Cllr Roger Evans	Co-opted Member - Shropshire Council
Cllr Liz Harvey	Co-opted Member Herefordshire Council
Cllr Helen Jones	Substantive Member - Bromsgrove District Council
Cllr Nigel Lumby	Substantive Member - Shropshire Council
Cllr Kelly Middleton	Substantive Member Telford and Wrekin Council
Cllr Tracey Onslow	Substantive Member - Wyre Forest District Council
Cllr Richard Overton	Co-opted Member Telford and Wrekin Council
Cllr Vivienne Parry	Co-opted Member - Shropshire Council
Cllr Tony Parsons	Co-opted Member Shropshire Council
Cllr Tom Piotrowski	Substantive Member Worcester City Council
Cllr James Stanley	Substantive Member - Worcestershire County Council
Mrs C Clive	Co-opted Independent Lay Member
Ms B McDowall	Co-opted Independent Lay Member

Agenda

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To obtain further information or a copy of this agenda contact Samantha Morris, Scrutiny Officer on Worcester (01905) 844963 email: sjmorris@worcestershire.gov.uk

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WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

27 JULY 2023

APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Recommendations

1. **It is recommended that the Panel notes the change in co-opted membership for Shropshire Council, Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils.**

Background

2. The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 ('the Act') requires a West Mercia Police and Crime Panel of 10 'substantive' elected members and additional co-optees up to a maximum total of 20 members on the Panel. The Panel must co-opt at least 2 members who are 'independent' of the local authorities, PCC and police, etc. All members of the Panel may vote whether appointed or co-opted.
3. When established, the Panel agreed to the co-option of members to meet the 'politically balance appointment objective' or such members as may be nominated from time to time by their respective authorities to achieve the balanced appointment objective. The composition of the Panel is 17, made up of 10 'substantive' and 5 local authority co-opted councillors and 2 independent lay members.

Appointment of co-opted elected members

4. The Panel is asked to note that the following members have appointed to the Panel as a co-opted members:

Shropshire Council:

- Tony Parsons
- Vivienne Parry
- Roger Evans

Herefordshire Council

- Liz Harvey

Telford and Wrekin Council

- Richard Overton

Contact Point for the Report

Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager
Tel: 01905 844968 Email: sjmorris@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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Minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel

County Hall, Worcester WR5 2NP

Friday, 3 February 2023, 11.00 am

Present:

Cllr Barry Durkin (Chairman), Cllr Rob Adams, Cllr Jeff Anderson, Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Mrs C Clive, Cllr Roger Evans, Cllr Nigel Lumby, Cllr Steve Mackay, Ms B McDowall, Cllr Vivienne Parry, Cllr James Stanley and Cllr Paul Watling

Also attended:

John Champion, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner
 Gareth Boulton, Chief Executive, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
 Chief Constable Pippa Mills, West Mercia Police
 Paul Benfield, Treasurer, Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

Paul Kinsella, Senior Public Health Practitioner
 Phil Rook, Director of Resources, Worcestershire Children First
 Sheena Jones, Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager
 Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. Presentation handouts for West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Budget and Precept 2023/24 (circulated at the Meeting)
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 November 2022 (previously circulated).

(Copies of documents A and B will be attached to the signed Minutes).

464 Welcome and Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular the new Panel Member, Cllr David Wright (Telford and Wrekin Council) who had replaced Cllr

Jim Lavery. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Lavery for his services to the Panel over the last few years.

465 Named Substitutes

Cllr Steve Mackay (Worcestershire) for Cllr Aled Luckman.

466 Apologies and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllrs Graham Ballinger (Wyre Forest), Helen Jones (Bromsgrove), Aled Luckman (Worcestershire), Nyear Nazir (Redditch), Tom Wells (Malvern) and David Wright (Telford and Wrekin).

Declarations of interest were made by Cllrs Steve Mackay and Nigel Lumby who were retired Police Officers in receipt of a Police Pension (not West Mercia Police).

467 Public Participation

None.

468 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

469 West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's Proposed Budget and Precept 2023/24

The Panel was asked to consider the:

- (i) West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC's) Proposed Budget 2023/24 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 – 2027/28;
- (ii) report of the PCP's Budget Scrutiny Task Group; and
- (iii) provide a report to the PCC on the proposed precept, including any recommendations, outlining whether it vetoes the precept or not.

The PCC gave a presentation to the Panel on his proposed budget (copies of which had been circulated to the Panel). In doing so, the following main points were highlighted:

- The precept proposal recommended to the Panel was to increase the precept by 5.94% for 2023/24, adding £14.84 to the annual Council Tax bill for a typical band D home. The PCC pointed out that even if the Panel approved the precept proposal, it wouldn't solve the financial challenges for 2023/24 and a budget deficit of £11.2m would still remain.

- The four pillars of the Safer West Mercia Plan (Putting Victims and Survivors First, Building a More Secure West Mercia, Reforming West Mercia and Reassuring West Mercia's Communities) were at the heart of the proposed investments for 2023/24.
- In terms of how success would be measured, a suite of key performance indicators (KPI's) had been developed covering the four pillars of the Safer West Mercia Plan.
- The PCC explained that he had never previously sought to maximise precept funding but on this occasion he believed that flexing the precept was the right thing in order to maintain service levels. Even with an increase close to the maximum uplift, there was still an £11.2m budget deficit and operational implications as a result.

The Lead Member of the Budget Task Group introduced the Report and thanked the Members of the Task Group and the supporting Officers involved for their hard work and commitment. The following main points were made:

- This year, the PCC ran the budget consultation as a two-stage process. The first part ran from the 27 April 2022 until the 11 July 2022 and was to understand the views of the public on local policing, contact and engagement and crime and anti-social behaviour issues. This was followed by the budget consultation which was launched on 6 December 2022 and closed on 6 January 2023. Members of the Task Group welcomed the earlier engagement in the Budget Consultation process this year and emphasised the importance of demonstrating in the Budget Consultation document the impact of the funding against outcomes.
- The Budget Task Group had conducted a more rigorous scrutiny this year as could be seen from the Schedule of Activity detailed at Appendix 1 of the Task Group report.
- Members of the Task Group had recommended that the Panel supported the PCC's proposal for an increase of Council Tax to £14.84 (equivalent to 5.94%) providing that the Panel received a quarterly budget monitoring report which included key performance indicators (as detailed in Appendix 2) to monitor the outcomes against the Budget so that it was possible for the PCP to identify trends, service improvements and satisfaction against the commitments in the West Mercia PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan. This recommendation also set out to ensure that in future years base budgets have been maintained to maximise investment and flexibility.

During the opportunity for discussion, the following main points were made:

- Whether the communities of West Mercia would be able to see the operational implications of the funding if the 5.4% precept proposal was not implemented, in particular the protection of the Force's problem-solving capability and key organisational enabling services. The PCC advised that although the Police would respond to reports of crime, the proactivity of the Force's response would be a casualty of not approving the 5.94% increase to the annual Council Tax.

- The increase of the precept would allow for the bridging of the financial deficit as well as investment in services.
- The Panel welcomed the KPI's which would provide the Panel with the opportunity to monitor the outcome of the investment. When asked if the additional funding would show a significant improvement in KPI's, the PCC reassured the Panel that improvements would be seen as a result of the investment made including improvements in public confidence and victim satisfaction.
- A Member suggested that the Council Tax flexibility offered to PCC's was as a result of poor government decisions and inadequate funding for Police Forces which left PCCs with no option but to use the flexibility offered to them and thus pass the increase on to taxpayers.
- Although the PCC was not aware of every PCC's precept proposal in the Country, most PCCs in the West Midlands were proposing to take advantage of the precept flexibility.
- The increase in the precept would enable the PCC to fund 40 additional police officers and thus provide more visible policing across the Force area, which included the roll out of the Stronger Communities Programme.

Having considered the reports, the following recommendation as proposed by the Panel's Budget Task Group was considered:

That the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel support the PCC's proposal for an increase of Council Tax to £14.84 (equivalent to 5.94%) providing that the Panel receives a quarterly budget monitoring report which includes key performance indicators (as attached) to monitor the outcomes against the Budget so that it is possible for the PCP to identify trends, service improvements and satisfaction against the commitments in the West Mercia PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan. This recommendation also sets out to ensure that in future years base budgets have been maintained to maximise investment and flexibility.

This recommendation was agreed by Members of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel by a majority vote of 8 in favour, 3 against the recommendation.

Following the meeting, a report from the Panel would be sent to the PCC.

470 Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report

The Panel received an update on the activity undertaken by PCC in support of his Safer West Mercia Plan and an update on police performance.

The PCC highlighted the following points from the Report:

- A new Deputy Chief Executive had been appointed and had started work in December 2022.
- The PCC had been successful in a partnership bid of £650,000 across 2 years, with Shropshire & Telford ICS, and Herefordshire & Worcestershire ICS to NHSE/I in December. The bid was for a complex

care multi-agency service, to support victims of Sexual Violence with complex needs. The service would enable tailored provision, triaging, case meetings, stabilisation or faster access, overall achieving better outcomes and puts the victims at the centre of their own recovery.

- Good progress was being made against His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police (published 17 November) – The Panel would be provided with an update at its next meeting on 12 June 2023.

During the discussion, the following main points were made:

- A Member highlighted the A49 (Shropshire) which was a high risk route and asked if more support could be provided by the Police. In response, the PCC suggested that if a joint meeting was arranged between Shropshire Council and Highways England he would make arrangements to attend the meeting.
- Concerns were expressed about the delays in the criminal justice system and the PCC was asked whether there was anything that the PCP could do to help. The PCC emphasised the importance of keeping the situation on the radar and as previously mentioned Hereford Court was still not sitting and any help with re-opening it would be welcomed. The Chairman reminded members that the Panel had written to the Leader of Herefordshire Council to urge that the Court was re-opened following its November 2022 meeting. The impact of the delays on victims was worrying and puts strain on them and the Victim Care Unit but also was resulting in less guilty pleas. It was agreed that delivery of justice should be at the centre of any discussions.
- It was noted that at the end of the third quarter of the financial year, the financial position of West Mercia was an estimated revenue underspend of £4.388m (1.6%) against the total budget of £261m. The underspend had mostly resulted from the profile of recruitment of Police Officers occurring towards the end of the financial year, and also from managing Staff recruitment to ensure that police officer recruitment could be prioritised and in order to manage the effect of the larger than expected pay award for 2022/23. The PCC confirmed that the Chief Constable had reassured him that the force remained on track to onboard the current agreed allocation of officers (including the 20 additional officers) by March 2023, despite a challenging employment market.
- The PCC acknowledged that there were challenges around the existing fire-arms range and that a new facility could be a good income generation opportunity.
- The PCC was actively engaged in the public consultation around the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) Review, specifically around the status of police headquarters at Hindlip. The review proposed to remove Major Developed Site status for Hindlip Park. If confirmed, this would threaten the long-term viability of the site as an operational headquarters for both the police force and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The PCC added that lawyers had been engaged to provide support with this.

- Delivery of the annual planned programme of minor works and refurbishments continued to provide significant improvements to the estate. Examples included the provision of a new Learning & Training Hub at Bridgnorth police station, major refurbishment of the Hereford MASH facility and improvements to the Dog Section Training facility at Hindlip.
- The PCC, Deputy PCC and Assistant PCC continued to carry out engagements with communities, such as attending parish council meetings, visiting local community groups, and those that receive funding from the PCC. A total of 74 engagements took place between October and December. This was a significant increase on the previous quarter. A Member commended the PCC for this approach as it was making a significant difference to the farming communities – an invitation was extended to the PCC to visit some local farms.

With regard to the KPI’s for monitoring the outcomes of the precept funding against the Safer West Mercia Plan, it was agreed that the quarterly performance regime would be discussed outside of the meeting.

471 Work Programme

It was agreed that an update on the progress made against His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police (published 17 November) would be added to the Work Programme for the 12 June 2023 meeting.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm

Chairman



WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 JULY 2023

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PCC

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider the report.

Background

2. Under Section 12 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the Police and Crime Commissioner (the PCC) is required to report to the Police and Crime Panel (the Panel) on the exercise of his functions in each financial year. Specifically, the Annual Report should report on:
 - a. the exercise of the PCC's functions in each financial year, and
 - b. the progress which has been made in the financial year in meeting the police and crime objectives in the PCC's Police and Crime Plan.
3. The draft Annual Report for 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 1 for the Panel's consideration. The report provides a high-level overview of the PCC's work over the last financial year.
4. In accordance with the Act, members of the Panel are required to review the report and to make any recommendations to the Police and Crime Commissioner for consideration. The Police and Crime Commissioner must then respond to any report or recommendations that the Panel make prior to publishing the final version on the report.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Financial Implications

None.

Legal Implications

In presenting this draft annual report to the Panel for consideration, the PCC and the Panel are fulfilling their respective statutory obligations as set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Failure to do so would mean a breach of statutory duty.

Equality Implications

None.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Draft Annual Report of the PCC 2022/23

Contact Points for the Report

For the Police and Crime Panel: Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager, Worcestershire County Council

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For the Police and Crime Commissioner: Gareth Boulton, Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Executive

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website](#)

Annual report

2022-23



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Foreword

I am clear in my commitment to the communities of West Mercia – I will work hard to make sure that they are safe and feel safe, and the issues that are causing the most harm are tackled.

Over 2022/23, I can report progress on delivering that commitment. Either through focusing the budget, and resources I have at my disposal, holding the Chief Constable to account for the effect of operational policing and working with partners to tackle local issues that are affecting communities.

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Last year saw an additional £15m in funding for policing. This enabled West Mercia Police to build on delivering an efficient and effective service to all communities. To provide a snapshot of the progress made over the last year, it is pleasing to see that there has been an improvement in the levels of confidence in West Mercia Police, increasing by 2% on the previous year. Delivering on my commitments around putting victims and survivors first, it is pleasing that the Victim Advice Line contacted and supported 5,853 victims. This will ensure those affected by crime are given the relevant support to enable them to move on with their lives. As a result of partnership work, a number of areas have seen a reduction in anti-social behaviour, crime levels and fly-tipping. All of which are concerns of communities across West Mercia.

Despite that progress, I remain frustrated at the pace of that delivery of improvement to the public. I am frustrated with the pace of some of the change within West Mercia Police, as I am well aware that the public is not yet seeing the full benefit of the additional 500 police officers that have been recruited. My confidence survey has highlighted that for the 12 months, ending December 22, 20% of residents saw an officer or PCSO at least once a week. This is a 5% reduction on levels seen during the same period in the previous year. I am therefore committed to ensuring this improves.

I know that the public of West Mercia value their local police officers being visible and accessible. I have continued to focus delivering on what communities want – this is why I supported the force in not only delivering on the Police Uplift programme, but exceeding it, by bringing the officer total to 2,456 for 2022/23. This is the highest establishment figure on record in West Mercia. I will continue to support the force in ensuring these

additional officers are focused on what matters to communities. In the same way that confidence in policing may be damaged by the litany of police misconduct that has dominated our headlines, not responding to, or being seen to respond to, community concerns is an equal threat to public confidence.

My drive is to continue doing better for the communities of West Mercia. I have therefore supported the force with the resources it needs to enable officers to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively. I have challenged and supported the force in areas of concern through my Assurance & Accountability meetings with the Chief Constable. These meetings, once titled holding to account, underwent a thorough review to ensure the process is efficient and effective.

Reflecting on my own office, I have also made significant changes this year, including recruiting a new Chief Executive, Deputy PCC and supporting a wider restructure within my office. I will continue to ensure it is fit for purpose to efficiently and effectively deliver the priorities of our communities



and support the expansion of my role as PCC.

Supporting my focus on prevention, I have been pleased to continue working in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council to deliver the Safer & Stronger Communities programme. It has been pleasing to see progress, particularly around the reduction of anti-social behaviour and fly tipping, as well as increases to public confidence. There has also been an improvement in clubs and projects for people, who live in the area, to get involved in. The projects have also created a sense of community through the investment in CCTV and tidying of public spaces. I am pleased that through my budget for 2023/24, I will be providing funding to the other areas within West Mercia to tackle their key concerns.

This last year has also seen the start of my role as Senior Responsible Officer for the local Combatting Drugs Partnership, which supports the Government's 'From Harm to Hope' 10-year drugs plan. I hear regularly from communities about their concerns in relation to drugs and the crime

associated with them. By educating people about the dangers of drugs, intervening with the right help when substance abuse happens and enforcing the law to stop criminals profiting from misery, we will see and feel a real change.

The subject of violence against women and girls has very much remained the focus of my work as PCC, as well as nationally. This has been reflected in the services I have continued to fund and the securing of additional funds, to the tune of more than £2million, to tackle sexual and domestic violence and create safer spaces within communities.

It is saddening that the poor traits of society are replicated in those that serve in the police. National

reports have shone a light on cases of sexual assaults, misogyny, and rape within police forces. It is my responsibility to support and challenge the force to ensure these kinds of individuals are prevented from joining and those that are currently employed are rooted out. This has naturally, and quite rightly, meant that the reputation of policing has been called into question, which has added to the challenge of building people's confidence and trust in their police force. In West Mercia, it is good that confidence in policing remains high.

Within West Mercia, in July, we saw the publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (IITCSE) within Telford & Wrekin. I said then, and I will say it again, that my focus and drive as PCC is to ensure that lessons are learned to ensure no further harm is caused. I will continue playing my role in ensuring those that live in West

Mercia are safe and I will support West Mercia Police to allow them to do the same.

As I look ahead to next year, I remain resolute in ensuring West Mercia Police delivers a quality level of policing for the communities it serves. Through my investment, I am confident there will be improvements where the service is falling short.

The year in numbers 2022/23



Putting victims and survivors first

15,000+

victims referred for onward assessment and triage to the Victim Advice Line

68%

of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Mercia Police

59,494

victims receiving information about how to access support

80%

conviction rate for domestic abuse cases at court

2,421

new referrals to Women's Aid IDVA service

88%

of witnesses attended court



Building a more secure West Mercia

94,842

offences were recorded

2,096

hate crimes reported

27,476

violence without injury offences

630

offenders managed by IOM

4,098

rape and other sexual offences

21,226

victims and witnesses supported by West Mercia's Victim Care Unit*

49

people killed on West Mercia's roads

* Rolling 12-month figure at end of January 2023



Reforming West Mercia

£260.5m

budget - fourth lowest Council Tax increase since 2016

183,274

999 calls received

91%

of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds

86%

of residents are confident they could access the police in an emergency*

27,991

reports made online to the public contact centre

Average wait time for 101 calls is 2 minutes 16 seconds

Continue to deliver the £40m, four-year digital improvement programme

Construction commenced on the Joint Redditch Police and Fire Station

£2m

annual investment in estates improvements to assets, infrastructure & buildings

£2.7m

investment in progressing major estates capital project projects at Redditch Combined Police & Fire Hub and a new Firearms Range at Hindlip



Reassuring West Mercia's communities

84%

of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police**

56%

satisfied with levels of local policing*

72%

feel crime and ASB are not much of a problem at all in their local area*

38%

of stop and searches resulted in a police action being taken

222

independent custody visits

3%

decrease in recorded police complaints

** West Mercia Confidence and Perceptions Survey 22/23

Putting victims and survivors first

I'm committed to ensuring that the public are at the heart of my Safer West Mercia Plan, and this includes putting victims and survivors right at the centre of the criminal justice system. I want every victim to get support that is tailored and appropriate and helps them to cope and recover with whatever harm has come to them.

Page 19 My Commissioning team continued to attract new funding and support organisations to have more sustainable funding streams throughout 2022/23, with multiple successful funding bids that I have been proud to lead in order to support the delivery of my Safer West Mercia Plan.

I have been successful in attracting a further £1.9m of funding from the Ministry of Justice, specifically to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to this funding, an additional £130,451 of funding has been provided alongside the core £1.5m victims grant, taking the final allocation of spend for victims' services for 2022/23 to over £3.5m, an increase of over £200,000 from the previous year.

In addition, £4.7m of funding has already been secured for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

This additional funding has enabled some sustainability for 20 additional roles within PCC commissioned service providers. These roles range from counsellors to children and young people (CYP) workers who are tackling technology-assisted exploitation abuse and risk management, focused on delivering better outcomes for victims and survivors across West Mercia.

The Victim Advice Line (VAL) is designed to get victims faster access to the right help by ensuring they receive the level and type of support that is tailored to their individual needs. During 2022/23, the VAL has contacted over 15,000 victims with identified needs and offered support to 6,215 victims who requested it. 95% of victims who left the VAL service in the same period did so with a positive outcome. The VAL has supported officer training by producing a series of 'The Voice of The Victim' videos as part of my commitment to trauma-informed front-line approaches, with



surveys, feedback and dip sampling continuing to test this. I am in the process of working with the force to review the provision of services to support victims in West Mercia, which will include the provision provided by the Victim Advice Line.

“I live on my own. It was particularly helpful to have someone to talk to. It gave me confidence to move on and to try and put it out of my mind, also the fact that the line was always open to have further conversation if I felt I needed it.”

For victims that have reported a crime, ensuring they receive the service they need at every step of their contact with the police and wider criminal justice partners is vital if they are to cope and recover. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims’ Code) is the statutory code that sets out the minimum level of service that victims should receive from the criminal justice system.

Whilst high, I am committed to seeing a greater increase in confidence levels that the public have in West Mercia Police. I know the importance of

public confidence and I’m assured it can improve. This continues to be a priority of mine, as 82% falls short of the 88% target. Specific areas of focus centre around Shropshire and Herefordshire, which have the lowest levels of confidence across the whole area.

Except for hate crime, which has seen a 2% increase, and road safety, which has remained the same, the satisfaction levels of victims of domestic abuse, burglary and violent crime have all gradually declined since April 2021. The most notable decline is for violent crime which has dropped from 69% to 56%.

Throughout 2022, I have raised victim satisfaction and confidence in a number of Assurance & Accountability sessions, where I hold the Chief Constable to account. In May, August, November, and December, I sought assurance from the Chief Constable that this too was a priority for West Mercia Police, seeking her commitment to making improvements. During early 2023, I have also



made some improvements to the Assurance & Accountability process, the outcome of which is that I will have four quarterly performance focused meetings with the Chief Constable for the 2023/24 year.

The VAL is supporting both my Safer West Mercia Plan priority and the force's Victims' Code compliance by ensuring that victims are informed and have the information they are entitled to. The VAL oversees the Victim Right to Review (VRR) scheme on behalf of the force, which gives victims the right to ask for a review of a police decision not to charge a suspect. In the last year, 21 new VRR requests were raised and overseen by VAL.

Further funding secured from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) enabled a specialist Sexual Abuse and Violence Navigator (SVN) post to be continued in the VAL up to 31st March 2025. The SVN is a fully trained Independent Sexual Violence Advisor and counsellor that provides a single point of contact for victims and offers a personalised support pathway. They will review all sexual offence reports

(whether a referral has been received or not) to West Mercia Police and liaise with the investigating officer and partners to assess whether they have been offered, or are receiving, support. If not, the SVN contacts them to undertake a detailed needs assessment and offer support. This allows victims to focus on their recovery rather than trying to navigate a complex support system.

The role of the SVN has been integral in reducing the number of sexual violence victims not getting the support they are entitled to. There is still a gap in officers' knowledge of services, needs and rights of victims of sexual offences. However, without the SVN role, many victims would not have had information that allows them to make informed choices about accessing support.

{The VAL} "Listened to how crime has affected me. Listened which makes a lot of difference"

Victim Support (VS) are commissioned to provide a victim support service across West Mercia to help victims cope and recover. VS work closely with the VAL who refer victims into the service. 1,480 victims

have been referred into Victim Support in 2022/23. Their multi-crime Victim Care Co-ordinators tailor support to individual needs to enable those impacted by the harm of crime to cope and recover.

“If it hadn’t been for you, I don’t think I could have gone on to give evidence in court. I only wish I’d had your support sooner.”

The introduction of a modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) specialist post within the VS service has provided key learning around gaps in professional knowledge and work to integrate the role, such as the need for prior specialist consultation to be integral to planned operations with West Mercia Police. The role has added value by increasing partnership awareness around the challenging, complex nature of MSHT. The role ensured key messaging is disseminated and appropriate identification, response to, and support of those who are so vulnerably exploited, but all too often criminalised, is improved.

In addition to the direct service delivery of its local team, victims of crime in West Mercia are also given access to a range of national VS services including:

- 24hr support via Supportline – Victim Support’s telephone support service that is open every day of the year including bank holidays. Any support provided to West Mercia residents is picked up by VS in West Mercia.
- 24hr support via Live Chat – Victim Support’s online chat service, which is available every day of the year including bank holidays. Any support provided to West Mercia residents will be added to the case management system and picked up by the local team.
- Information and self-help resources via My Support Space – an online resource filled with interactive guides related to specific crime types, support needs and areas of the CJS.



Victim Support also deliver a restorative justice (RJ) service by bringing those that have been harmed by crime, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected to play a part in repairing harm and finding a positive way forward. This year VS worked with 67 individuals across a range of crime types, including child to parent domestic abuse and incidents within school settings. RJ has proven to have a greater satisfaction rate for empowering victims, enabling them to cope and recover, and improving their overall experience of the criminal justice system and reintegration (moving on) from the crime.

“I am very grateful to you for helping him understand the consequences of his actions.”

West Mercia hate crime offences have more than doubled in the last five years. For the first six months of 2021/22 total hate crime records have reached the levels seen for the total year of 2019/20. Despite the rise in recorded offences, we know that many hate crimes and incidents largely go unreported and the true number of offences

is far higher. I am committed to protecting lives and preventing the damage done to people and communities because of hate crime. As such, I am pleased to have granted £82,000 towards Victim Support’s Hate Crime Engagement and Awareness Project ‘I am ME!’.

This 12-month project, which began in October 2022, has so far delivered over 30 awareness/training and outreach/community events engaging with nearly 500 people. On the back of this early success and the positive feedback received I have decided to extend the project until March 2024.

Alongside West Mercia Police I agreed to join a pilot testing a new app ‘Kulpa’ aimed at supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Kulpa is a phone app that is accredited by UKAS for two international standards. The app was originally developed to capture best evidence in the form of forensic quality photographs of injuries. However, it now provides the ability to capture and store all forms of evidence on the ‘Kulpa cloud’, in a way that ensures it holds evidential weight and



is immediately legally admissible and is therefore able to be used instantly by law enforcement.

The launch of this app further demonstrates my commitment to ensuring that victims and their voice are central to the criminal justice system.

“The app looks really straight forward. It gives the opportunity for survivors to store evidence in one place. Phones shouldn’t need to be seized by the police.”

“I personally really like this app. I have been a victim of domestic abuse and from my own experience the thought of being able to securely store evidence all in one place is a fabulous idea and I feel it empowers victims to take control and it helps speed up the whole police process.”

Specialist support service

2022 saw delivery of the second of a three year contract with West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre for the provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA). The ISVA service has received 1,622 referrals and has provided

support to 2,650 victims in 2022/2023. The increased investment into these specialised services supports my commitment to ensure that victims have an appropriate range of help based on their need. The annual budget for this provision in 2022/2023 is £1,898,936.

The numbers of victims/survivors leaving the service has reduced this year, largely contributed to by the backlog of cases waiting to go to court. These delays are unacceptable and are having a significant impact on victims and survivors waiting within the system. These delays are not only prolonging the trauma, but also resulting in some victims withdrawing from the process all together. This means offenders aren’t being brought to justice. I therefore remain committed to playing my part in making improvements where needed, such as addressing the lack of a crown court facility in Herefordshire. However, it is pleasing that 54% of those leaving the service had increased confidence in the CJS, a 3% increase from last year. Of those leaving the service, 85% felt better able to cope and recover with aspects of everyday life.

A poem written by a client to her Independent Sexual Violence Advisor:

**It's going to be hard to say goodbye
I'll have to try not to cry
Thank you for helping me get by
Thank you for always being there to reply
You saved my life numerous times
You always seem to notice the signs
Thank you for always having the time
Ur an amazing support
Being there when I opened the report
Especially you sticking by me through court
But it's come to that time for me to move on and restart
You've been my rock right from the start
You have a very big heart
Thank you for always being there when I fall apart
Thank you for being my first person for support**

I have committed £492,175 across three years for AXIS Counselling to deliver a range of therapeutic counselling services to victims and survivors of sexual abuse in Shropshire and Telford. This funding includes specialist provision to support victims and survivors that have

learning disabilities or difficulties, alongside specialist support for children aged 5-10 years. This funding has enabled these important services to be provided up to 31st March 2025.

Putting victims and their voice at the heart of the criminal justice system is a key priority within my Safer West Mercia Plan. In June 2022, I hosted a 'Listening to the Voice of Victim and Survivors' conference where we were fortunate enough to be joined by some survivors who shared their experiences of the criminal justice system. It reinforced a very important message that there is always more that can be done, and I will continue to be relentless in my drive to see that happen. Since the conference, I have engaged with victims and survivors who have met with my commissioning and policy teams. Their input has been integral around in-service re-design and development in terms of their ability and power to help others to recognise and to understand the scale, complexity and impact of sexual violence and abuse.

A small number of survivors of sexual violence have agreed to sit on a lived experience group. As part of my commitment to victims and survivors, I want their voices to be heard when I am commissioning services designed to meet their needs. The benefits of service user involvement are not limited to service design improvements. Involvement can have a direct benefit to service users, including improved confidence, skills and knowledge and wider wellbeing benefits.

Following the production of a needs assessment which focused on the mental health of survivors of sexual violence, which was undertaken in 2021/22, I have worked collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to implement some of the recommendations from the report.

Some specific actions I have undertaken are below.

Survivors Pathway Development

Feedback from the needs assessment informed me that survivors find the pathways to access support challenging. I have been working collaboratively

with partners, alongside victims and survivors, to develop an online Survivor Pathway. The Pathway will promote clear access to support, will improve awareness of the range of support options available to survivors and their families and include ways to more effectively reach survivors who do not report sexual assault and abuse to the police.

Collaboration

The needs assessment recommended that in order to meet victim and survivors needs, partners (commissioners, stakeholders and providers) should aim to work more closely in the future, beyond the task of creating pathways. I have worked with the Integrated Care Boards in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin to submit a bid to NHS England & Improvement (NHSE/I) to pilot an innovative Complex Care Pathfinder project for victims of sexual assault and abuse. This bid was successful and, as a result, I was awarded £1.3m over the next two years. The aim of the project is to commission services which address needs of victims and



survivors which cannot be met with existing services. These include:

- Individuals with complex trauma-related mental health needs, who are deemed 'too complex' for SARC therapeutic services, or who experience long waiting lists for community mental health services.
- Individuals who are/have engaged with mental health services for complex trauma related mental health needs relevant to their experience of sexual assault and abuse, who have not been able to receive a tailored, trauma-informed therapeutic offer that meets the breadth of their psychological, social and occupational wellbeing needs.

"I needed to talk to someone outside of my circle. My counsellor was so supportive and listened without judgement; she also taught me some valuable coping techniques to help me cope through one of the worst experiences of my life."

"My counsellor was excellent, and I found the method of trauma-based therapy very effective."

As part of my commitment following the victim and survivor conference in June 2022, I established a West Mercia Joint Strategic Sexual Assault and Abuse Board. The board has senior representation from a range of key partners within West Mercia with the overall aim of improving outcomes for victims of sexual assault and abuse. Representation includes partners from health, education, safeguarding, Crown Prosecution Service, police, children's services, specialist sexual violence services, women's services, University of Worcester, Community Safety Partnerships and the High Sheriff.

I am also pleased and proud to be able to say that each meeting has had the voice of the victim echoed by direct representation.

West Mercia has two Sexual Assault & Referral Centres (SARCs), which I fund and support financially, as well as provide the maintenance through my Estates services. The SARCs provide a safe environment for victims of sexual assault and abuse to receive crisis care, medical and forensic examinations, and emergency contraception.

They can also provide access to immediate crisis counselling and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Working with NHSE/I and PCCs from across West Midlands I am re-commissioning the Adult SARC service, with the new contract to commence from April 2024.

Throughout this year, I have been working with the NHSE/I and West Mercia Police to ensure that the SARCs in West Mercia meet the forensic standards required. As part of this work, I have committed funding for two years to employ a Forensic Quality Manager to support the implementation of the required forensic standards by the Forensic Science Regulator, for both sites in West Mercia.

In addition, I have continued to provide financial support to the Regional Paediatric Sexual Assault Service (SAS) which provides specialist care for children and young people who have disclosed sexual assault, or who may have been subject to sexual abuse. My contribution of just under £130,000 forms part of a regional £2m contract.

Within the service, children and young people are supported by an experienced paediatrician, specially trained in forensic examination, as well as a crisis worker. Last year, 285 victims from West Mercia were referred into the service, over 100 more than the previous year, demonstrating the need for this critically important service.

I have been able to secure an additional £100,000 from NHSE/I to continue the role of the Sexual Violence Portfolio Lead Officer for an extra two years up to 31st March 2025. The post holder, located in my office, works with West Mercia Police and partners to deliver the objectives set out in the national NHSE/I Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy.

Tackling domestic abuse continues to be a key priority for me. Inflicting any kind of harm, be it emotional, physical, or psychological, is simply not acceptable.

“I’ve been through lots of difficult times, the support which we have and still receive has changed our lives for better. Thank you so much for all your support, time and understanding because we are not feeling alone especially by not having any family in the UK.”

During this year, I have worked in partnership with Worcestershire County Council to re-commission West Mercia Women’s Aid (WMWA) to provide an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service across West Mercia. Serving as a victim’s primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients at the point of crisis to assess the level of risk and develop tailored options and safety plans. The new contract runs for three years up to March 2025, with a total value of £3,348,644 – which includes additional funding that I have been able to secure from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Within the IDVA contract, WMWA provide IDVAs in community settings, as well as the hospitals across West Mercia.

I have been successful in several funding applications to the MoJ for services to support victims of domestic abuse. Through this funding, WMWA have been awarded £543,867 until March 2025 as well as a further £710,931.

This funding has provided specialist advisors who work with; children and young people experiencing domestic abuse within their own relationships (YPIDVA); minority ethnic communities; and families going through the family and civil courts. As well as these roles, there are two specialist YPIDVA roles that work with children and young people with additional needs, as well as specialist IDVAs working with those with additional needs. Recognising that men, as well as women, can be victims of domestic abuse, funding was also approved for an IDVA to work specifically with men and boys. All roles are now also commissioned until 2025 in line with the core contract.

In 2022/23 Women's Aid supported 1,391 victims and survivors through their range of specialist IDVA services. 98% of those leaving the service reported the end of, or a reduction, in all abuse types, with 99% reporting a reduction in further risk of harm. The YPIDVAs supported 89 victims and survivors.

"XXX has been amazing with me, from the age of 17 I've been having the same problems and couldn't find a way out or someone that wanted to help me, she's supported me like no one has ever before!"

"I couldn't have asked for more supportive and genuinely caring people to help me through this dark chapter, make sense of it all and reassure me that things would get better. I'll be forever grateful to this organisation."

WMWA also provide a hospital based IDVA (HIDVA) service in the four acute hospitals in the West Mercia area. In 22/23, the HIDVA service (who provide a service to any victim or survivor of domestic abuse, rather than just high risk) provided

support to 156 victims and survivors who fully engaged. 97% left the service feeling a reduction in the risk of further harm."

"My client was really appreciative of the support and the options available to her. She found it reassuring that we can all work as a multi - agency behind the scenes to establish a safe plan for her, or that MARAC may be able to assist with concerns around his Mental Health should this decline or become unmanageable." [Service user feedback]

This year, I have provided funding to WMWA to run a children and young people's (CYP) project. The service provides children and young people's workers to engage with 5-19 year olds who are identified as at risk of suffering significant negative outcomes as a result of domestic abuse within their family/home environment.



386 referrals have been received throughout the year with 162 CYP supported through group programmes or one-to-one support. WMWA report that the largest number of referrals came from those aged 11-13 years old, with a growing number also being seen from those aged 4-7 years old. 90% of children and young people reported that their confidence had grown, 89% reported that they understood what a positive and healthy relationship looked like, 100% felt their voice had been heard, and 99% felt better educated about healthy relationships.

Support workers have received the following comment from an attendee and their parents:

"I just want to say thank you. In all my years of seeking help for A and us, I have never found anyone that could do what you did yesterday. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for taking the time to connect with her and communicate with her the way you did, as that was a complete game changer in my experience of working with professionals to help my family."

By securing additional funding from the MoJ, I have also been able to provide funding to Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service for the provision of support services for adults and CYP experiencing domestic abuse in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. This has enabled the service to employ one full-time, plus a part-time (equivalent), specialist IDVA who provides support for high-risk victims and survivors, as well as outreach community support.

In addition to the services I have outlined, there are a number of other projects and organisations receiving domestic abuse funding from my office. In many cases, it supplements other funding I already provide. Examples include:

- Victim Advice Line (VAL) – to deliver the domestic abuse proactive intervention project, which seeks to pro-actively identify victims or survivors of domestic abuse who may not have accessed any support services, as well as facilitate pathways into support services.

- Willowdene – to provide specialist support to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, including counselling, for those already within the Willowdene rehabilitation services.
- Funding for two domestic abuse support officers – one in Worcestershire and the other in Herefordshire who provide support to the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panels as part of the DRIVE project.

Through the investments I have made, both in specialist commissioned services and the resources within West Mercia Police, I am committed to ensuring victims get the justice they deserve and the support they need.

“XXX contacted me and I wasn’t so sure I needed to talk but how wrong I was. She has been so wonderful to me; she really listens and takes in what I’ve said and has gone above and beyond with the time she has given me. She’s been like a really good friend I’ve known for ages. A real credit to Women’s Aid. Thank you so much.”

My Safer West Mercia plan is clear - putting the views of victims and survivors will be at the heart of everything I do. To support this, I have commissioned a three year programme of needs assessments to be used to inform future commissioning intentions. The first to be produced is a victim needs assessment, which is due by the end of May 2023 and seeks to identify the needs of victims in West Mercia, along with gaps in current service provision. In addition to this, future needs assessments have been programmed into the work plan around themes such as road safety, child sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls.



Building a more secure West Mercia

As PCC, reducing crime, re-offending and ensuring people are safe remains a key commitment of mine for the communities of West Mercia. Being safe is non-negotiable and I will continue to ensure the police have the resources, plans and focus they need to relentlessly fight crime and keep all of our communities safe from harm.

Policing demand

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I listened when the public said they wanted more police, and for them to be visible and accessible in their communities. In the last year alone, an additional 125 officers have been recruited and my budget provision for 2023/24 will see an additional 40 new officers join the force, which will take West Mercia's establishment to 2,496 – the highest establishment number on record for the force.

The 40 additional officers in 2023/24 will be based at the heart of communities in new Neighbourhood Crime Fighting teams and as Community Safety Engagement Officers. These new officers will continue the focus on neighbourhood policing and addressing key community concerns. I will support

the force in continuing to prioritise the greatest possible proportion of resource towards front-line policing and ultimately delivering the best for communities.

For the additional resources I have delivered to be truly effective, it is important that the force fully understands and manages the demand it faces.

Total recorded crime has increased by 9% in 2022/23 when compared to 2021/22. This was predominantly driven by increases in public order offences and some theft offences (shoplifting and all other theft offences) whilst other crime types saw smaller increases. The increase in total recorded crime has been seen nationally, and the crime rate in West Mercia remains significantly below the national average.

Whilst police recorded data has increased, estimates from the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) show levels of actual crime continue to decrease nationally. Increases in the numbers of crimes being recorded by police are likely the result of a number of factors including more



accurate crime recording, as well as improved awareness and confidence to report offences to the police. This creates a scenario where crime is falling, but demand on policing through recorded offences continues to increase.

The increased demand is reflected in the number of emergency 999 calls, which saw a 9% increase in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. Despite the increase in volume, it is pleasing to see in recent months that 999 call handling performance has been consistently above target (90% within 10 seconds).

Emergency calls will always be the priority, but it's also important that people can access the police in non-emergency situations. There are a number of ways in which the public can contact the police for non-emergency situations, including social media platforms. The use of online reporting of crimes has also continued to grow, with 27,991 requests for service made using this platform in 2021/22. This was a 25% increase on 2021/22 levels.

Whilst the role of the police will always be to respond to emergencies, the clear focus should be to prevent offending and victimisation in the first place. The more this can be achieved, the safer our communities will be, and the more demand on our police can be reduced. Therefore my 2023/24 budget commitments see a sharpened focus on preventing crime from occurring in the first place.

Tackling crime and reducing harm

Analysis that has been undertaken by the force, to better understand the increased number of homicides occurring across West Mercia, suggests one of the key local drivers to be serious and organised crime (SOC). West Mercia Police has developed a clear understanding of the threats and has a SOC strategy and delivery plan in place to strengthen its response. There is more progress and improvement to deliver, which is why I will work tirelessly with the police and partners to tackle criminality at its root. I will also hold the Chief Constable to account on this in the coming year.



West Mercia is encountering a rising number of criminals involved in cyber, fraud and economic crime. This is both as a result of the force's improvements in identification of fraud related activity, as well as a change in criminal behaviour. Although organised criminal groups (OCGs) are known for having a primary offence type, they will commonly extend their criminal behaviour across various crime types and across geographical borders, adapting their methods and approach based on current climate. The increasing reliance of the public on the use of technology and the rise in vulnerability and isolation has provided further opportunities to successfully involve themselves in cyber, fraud and economic crime for profit.

The primary criminal activity identified for around two thirds of OCGs is the supply of drugs, and this has remained consistent over the last 12 months. As of March 2023, there were 29 active OCGs mapped across West Mercia. Just over two thirds (69%) of OCGs (including both active and archived OCGs) have a primary crime type of drugs supply which includes several involved in County Lines.

During 2022/23, West Mercia Police closed down 21 county lines. A week of intensification in March 2023 became the most successful to date after three lines were closed and 60 arrests were made. As a result, 336 arrests were made, the force seized over £446,000 worth of drugs and £96,000 in cash. In addition, over 130 weapons were seized. I will ensure the force continues to relentlessly focus on dismantling organised crime and county lines during 2023/24.

As well as targeting those individuals responsible for supplying the local drugs market, providing early interventions to drug users can not only make a positive impact on the individuals concerned, but also to local communities and to potential future victims of crime.

Providing early intervention has continued to be a focus for 2022/23. I have commissioned the DIVERT project with my regional counterparts, using monies seized regionally from proceeds of crime. DIVERT is delivered by the charity Cranstoun and is an education programme that improves treatment pathways, diverts drug users from long-term drug

use and reduces drug-related crime. The DIVERT programme can be delivered remotely or in person and caters for anyone over 13-years-old found in possession of an illegal substance. Since April 2022, DIVERT has received 741 referrals, with an average of 62 per month. Of those who were then assessed, 237 have attended a group. The typical age of those who attended a group was between 18-32 years-old, with the most typical drug of choice being cannabis. Following encouraging results, since July 2022, I have extended the project for a further 12 months (until June 2023) and have provided funding totalling £58,388.

I am now working to commission a Regional Pre-Arrest Diversion Scheme for simple drug possession offences, which will operate across West Mercia, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and West Midlands. This scheme will ensure those found in possession of controlled drugs are fully aware of the potential risks they face, including the harms that their use may cause to themselves and others, and are able to make more informed choices. The

programme also seeks to support the roll-out of the national two-tier out of court disposal (OOCD) framework that all forces are aligned to from April 2023 and will draw on the lessons learnt by existing drug diversion schemes. It is expected that this scheme will work with a capacity of 670 individuals within West Mercia, with referrals being received via an out of court disposal issued by a police officer. The funding for this scheme for 2023/24 will come from monies seized regionally from proceeds of crime as well as £16,740.39 contributed from my office.

West Mercia have seen slight improvements in action taken* against offenders over the last part of the year. However, the proportion of offences where action is taken against offenders sits at only 8.6% for total recorded crimes across West Mercia with larger fluctuations seen across policing areas (6.9% in Shropshire to 10.9% in Herefordshire). When compared to most similar forces West Mercia see a lower-than-average rate of action taken. The disparity also continues between crime



*Action Taken = Charge/ Summons, Caution, Taken into Consideration, Penalty Notice for Disorder, Cannabis Warning, Community Resolution.

types with vehicle offences seeing action taken against 3.2% of offenders, 5.9% of rape offenders and 10.7% for violence with injury offenders. I am clear that West Mercia Police can continue to improve on this position.

Performance continues to be an issue where evidential difficulties prevent further action, or where the victim does not support the prosecution, with West Mercia seeing the highest usage of this outcome amongst most similar forces. Although remaining stable over the last 12 months, 30% of offences are finalised in this way and this increases to 62% for DA cases with an increase seen more recently for its use in DA cases. As with action taken, there is also disparity between policing areas with Shropshire being an outlier across the board for lower action taken levels and high use of OC16.

As referenced in my annual report last year, the Government has published their 10-year drug strategy which is focused on delivering the following outcomes:

- **Fewer people using drugs** – the strategy aims to reduce the number of people using drugs, particularly young people, and to prevent the initiation of drug use.
- **Fewer drug-related deaths** – the strategy aims to reduce the number of drug-related deaths by promoting effective treatment and support services for individuals struggling with addiction.
- **Less drug-related crime** – the strategy aims to reduce drug-related crime by disrupting drug markets and targeting drug-related criminal activity.
- **Better access to treatment and support** – the strategy aims to improve access to effective drug treatment and support services, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals.
- **More people in recovery** – the strategy aims to support individuals in their recovery journey, helping them to rebuild their lives and achieve their full potential.

- **Stronger families and communities** – the strategy aims to reduce the harm caused by drug use to families and communities, and to promote healthy and resilient communities.

In order to deliver the outcomes, the Government has established Combating Drug Partnerships (CDPs) across the country. There are two such partnerships in West Mercia. One for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and the other for Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The aim of the partnerships is to coordinate and integrate the efforts of different organisations to prevent drug and alcohol abuse, provide effective treatment and support for individuals struggling with addiction, and reduce drug and alcohol related harm to communities.

As the Senior Responsible Officer for both CDPs I will work tirelessly with partners to deliver the above outcomes, making West Mercia a safer place to live, work and visit.

While knife crime can also be associated with SOC activity it is a complex national issue that doesn't

have a single, specific cause. The force's approach to tackling knife crime goes above and beyond the enforcement element towards preventing crime from happening. Whilst the number of serious offences involving a knife or sharp instrument have increased locally, regionally, and nationally, the knife crime rate in West Mercia remains significantly lower than the national average.

Naturally our police have a central role to play in protecting us from knife crime and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that in West Mercia that work is happening effectively. However, a more holistic approach across our system and society is needed if we are going to be most effective.

My Safer West Mercia Plan includes a specific commitment to collaborate with police and partners to prevent and reduce serious violence including knife crime. Central to this is supporting the local delivery of the Government's new Serious Violence Duty (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022).

Over the last six months I have utilised my convening powers to bring specified authorities together across the force area to prepare for the implementation of the Duty, including leading on the funding application to the Home Office. I continue to work closely with Crest (appointed by the Home Office to provide the national support offer) to assess readiness of partners to implement the Duty. I am currently reviewing local governance arrangements to ensure I remain well placed to monitor local implementation of the Duty to reduce the risk of serious violence in West Mercia.

I am committed to continuing to work with partners to further reduce knife crime and serious violence in our communities and have ring-fenced £370,000 of funding towards the commissioning and evaluation of a West Mercia wide Children and Young Person Serious Violence Diversionary Service. The service will deliver a mentoring intervention programme that is focused on education, not criminalisation of young people, that seeks to stabilise/increase resilience and

opportunity by providing trusted adult, safe space support to improve outcomes of those who may be drawn into knife related activity in our region, offering an early pathway out.

Intervening at an early stage, and engaging with young people in a meaningful way, can have a significant long-term impact on changing an individual's path and ultimately stopping harm and crime. This is why I commissioned the CLIMB service, as part of my ambition towards a prevention agenda, which is delivered by the Children's Society.

The service supports children and young people who are displaying early indicators of being at risk of, or involved in, criminal exploitation across West Mercia. In 2022/23 the service gave sustained support to 631 children and young people aged 10-17 years-old. It is evident that the cost of living crisis is having an impact on families. A challenge for the service has been the increasing complexity of supporting and stabilising a young person, as access to mental health provision,



sustainable diversionary activity, or navigating systems with them, come under increasing demand and pressure, reflected by longer times in service. During the year, 158 children and young people came through the CLIMB service, having achieved a positive outcome by reducing their risk and improving their prospects, whether that was by sustaining an education placement or diversion into some vast array of activity tailored to need such as boxing, creative arts or music.

“I enjoy our sessions too. Climb is the rainbow that came from the black cloud I was under.”

“Your ‘real friends’ can become your worst enemies.” [A supported young person who was asked what they may tell their year 7 self]

“I was really close to getting involved in county lines, but now everything’s going the right way. I’ve GOT to get an apprenticeship this year. Even if it means going to college to re-do my GCSEs.” [Shropshire young person]

“I used to get exclusions every week and now I don’t. Used to be naughty at home and start fights, but now I don’t. I want to be in IT, now that I’m not naughty at school it’s easier because I’m in lessons.” [Supported young person]

Last autumn, I got to hear first-hand about some of the challenges faced by young people today when I welcomed some of the programme’s Steering Group to Hindlip Hall, where they led the way on a podcast with me, questioning me about my role and vocalising some of the issues they come up against in their respective communities. CLIMB staff have integrated and become an important key contributor across organisations, helping the force, local authorities, education establishments, and exploitation partnerships in formulating appropriate responses to tackling child criminal exploitation and systems change, and I look forward to the continuous commissioning review and service development the commissioning team has planned for this contract extension year.



Professionals and communities of West Mercia continue to benefit from the wide reach, high impact training delivered by the funding. I have continued to provide towards two Exploitation and Vulnerability Trainers, who deliver a broad oversight of the types of exploitation, signs, and responses for anyone with concerns. They have delivered training to social care and police professionals, parish councils, community organisations, taxi drivers, teachers, and more.

We all have a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) remains a key priority from the national level right through to the local.

The Independent Inquiry into Telford Child Sexual Exploitation was published on 12 July 2022. The report contained 47 recommendations, 13 of which related to West Mercia Police either solely or jointly with partner agencies. There were two recommendations for my office which are being tracked through action plans.

One of the recommendations for my office was to hold the Chief Constable to account following publication of the report. A specific holding to account meeting took place in March 2023. The force provided all the information required as part of the inquiry recommendation and I was able to scrutinise the force's governance, leadership, and progress in delivering against the 13 recommendations. I was reassured by progress made to date and I share a commitment with the Chief Constable to continue to work with partners, focusing on putting victims first. As recommended by the inquiry, a full partnership report is due to be published in June 2023 and I am confident that my office and West Mercia Police will be able to demonstrate clear improvements.

However, I am clear that learning should be implemented across the force area, not just in Telford & Wrekin.

This year I have increased the funding provided to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Service (WMRSASC) by a further £205,000 for the

provision of Branch, a direct support service to work with those aged 8-18 years-old (up to aged 24 years-old for those with additional needs) and an early intervention and prevention programme across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire and the Purple Leaf prevention service.

In 2022/2023 the Branch service has worked with 305 CYP directly, many of which are staying with the service longer due to the delays being experienced by courts. The Branch Practitioners work with a young person to understand what factors in their life may lead to an increased risk of CSE and identify what long-term support is needed. The team work with other support agencies to develop safety and support plans to help reduce risks to exploitation, especially in the absence of full-time education. Working alongside other organisations also helps to build the CYP self-advocacy skills and support network.

Age 14: "I like that you listen and show me you're listening."

Age 18: "I can't believe you have been around four years. I didn't think it was that long but you know it's great having you – I don't want say bye to you ever cos I really don't think I would have got through all the crap and seen the court case through."



The additional funding for Purple Leaf has allowed the development of two new roles; a Family Support Practitioner who will work alongside an Early Intervention Practitioner who can support dual experience cases; where a child or young person may be at risk of being harmed and who may also cause harm to others. A gap was identified for this dual experience support and the work follows the whole family approach with integrated parental/carer sessions where appropriate.

“The early warning signs were a new idea I had not encountered before.”

The core Purple Leaf service continues to achieve great success with its targeted education programme, delivering a modular programme tailored to the needs of a school, group or individual with sessions focused on consent, gender, sexualisation, social media, pornography, and bystander intervention. Last year, 2,431 children and young people across Herefordshire,

Worcestershire Shropshire received either a group or a 1:1 session.

Of those supplying feedback this latest quarter, 99% report that they have an increased understanding of consent and healthy relationships and the confidence to challenge behaviours rising each quarter to 100% this last quarter (*out of 30 responses to that particular question*).

“The new information about grooming and how to report it, cause when I was in year 9 being groomed and sexual exploited there wasn’t this type of support and was kind of pushed aside so glad it’s getting talked about now.”

Additionally, Purple Leaf have also delivered 41 sessions, reaching over 706 professionals to ensure key messaging and consistent approaches are cascaded through their awareness and learning sessions. I am pleased to see that last year, the numbers of parents and carers accessing these sessions increased, with 81 attending.

Service feedback highlights the importance of offering this safe conversational space for children and young people to discuss subject matter they may not otherwise get a platform.

“The breakdown of myths vs reality in sex and pornography was helpful.”

“I think the impact of porn session was particularly useful as it is so taboo.”

Following on from feedback from attendees, Purple Leaf adapted sessions accordingly to continue to meet the need. Some examples of feedback were:

- CYP would like more, or longer, sessions and smaller groups.
- CYP would like to see more LGBT+ examples/discussion.
- CYP wanted more on male issues including toxic masculinity.
- CYP would like more information about why people might choose not to have sex.

Purple Leaf demonstrated the importance of not only obtaining these views but acted collaboratively to ensure that young voices were heard, listened to and were integral to service development.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been rightly highlighted nationally in a number of harrowing recent examples. It is clear that as a whole society there is more work needed to address some of our cultural issues and attitudes.

I am aware that acquisitive crime, such as burglary, robbery and theft, causes huge harm to communities, which has been recognised by the Government in its National Priorities for Policing. I am committed to seeing that our communities don't have to face the fear of crime, or have their lives blighted by the actions of others – they should feel safe where they live. In support of this commitment, I have worked with partners to secure an additional £1,774,964 for 2022/23 and 2023/24 from the fourth Home Office Safer Streets fund.



This particular round of funding aimed to combine and expand previous focuses of the Safer Streets Funds and the Safety for Women at Night (SWaN) Fund through targeting neighbourhood crime, VAWG and ASB.

- **Bid 1 West Mercia Wide** - received funding of £391,120.60 with match funding from West Mercia Police and Street Watch Volunteer Scheme. Funding has provided an expansion of StreetWatch Schemes into areas where there is a clear fear of safety amongst women and girls. It also includes provision of a digital platform that provides functionality to alert and dispatch, instant location of victims, and scene location. To assist in addressing unacceptable behaviours within the Night-time Economy (NTE), training is provided to raise awareness and promote knowledge of safe spaces to go in time of crisis for help and support.
- **Bid 2 Shrewsbury, Shropshire** - received funding of £548,178 with match funding from Shropshire County and Town Council, Shrewsbury Town

Council, Shrewsbury Bid, Street Pastors and Shropshire CSP. Funding has provided a range of services such as street rangers and security officers designed to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve feelings of safety in the town centre area of Shrewsbury in particular.

- **Bid 3 Herefordshire** - received funding of £344,785 with match funding from Venture, Hereford City Improvements Project, Herefordshire County Council and West Mercia Police. The funding included expanding the 'Lean on me' programme, an education programme for partners in the night-time economy on sexually harmful behaviours, CCTV, lighting, landscaping and subway artwork.
- **Bid 4 Telford** - received funding of £490,881, which was match funded by Telford and Wrekin Council, Community Safety Partnership and West Mercia Police. The funding has paid for the implementation of Housing Enforcement Officers, Neighbourhood Coordinator, Active bystander programme, education and training

for young people in secondary schools on sexual harassment and abuse, target hardening by using CCTV and improved street lighting.

Throughout 2022, I have continued to work in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council to deliver the Safer & Stronger Communities project. Over the course of the project, it is pleasing to see that confidence levels have increased - with one ward seeing an increase of 16%. Levels of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour are continuing to see a decrease in a number of wards, which is the result of targeted activity to prevent these two concerns. Whilst levels of crime have not seen an overall decrease, I am confident that as the project beds in there will be further positive outcomes.

Due to the success of the Telford project, in my 2023/24 budget, I committed £2m to work with the remaining local authorities to roll out similar programmes across the rest of West Mercia, attracting match funding from partners to further enhance my investment to create more outcomes for the communities of West Mercia.

As well as committing to support me deliver my Safer West Mercia Priorities, West Mercia Police's Local Policing Community Charter is one example of how the force is also committed to protecting people from acquisitive crime, through a consistent problem-solving approach, supported by the Problem-Solving Hubs based in each of the five local policing areas. As part of my commitment to ensure the force has the resources to address acquisitive crime, I have continued to provide additional funding to the force for its 'We Don't Buy Crime' (WDBC) initiative and rural and business resources.

WDBC is a leading from the front project, which seeks to reduce acquisitive crime throughout West Mercia using a holistic approach to acquisitive crime and associated harm. The crime deterrent 'SmartWater' forensic property marking solution is distributed across villages and towns to protect people's property. Since inception in 2015 over 64,000 properties have been protected, 827 commercial properties and 50 farms across the



counties covered by West Mercia Police have also signed up to the initiative.

Along with more than 100 towns and villages the team also works with second-hand stores and fuel stations. A covert team looks to use the latest in covert technology to catch criminals in the act and exploitation and vulnerability trainers work with front-line professionals to raise awareness of associated harm and how to spot the signs someone may be being exploited by criminals.

Rural crime can have a significant impact on quality of life for our rural communities, who may feel particularly vulnerable because of their isolated location. My commitment to address rural crime has enabled the force to appoint five dedicated Rural and Business Officers (RABOs) to work with local communities to provide support, advice, and reassurance. Examples of the good work these officers have conducted include:

- **Telford & Wrekin** - petrol stations throughout the borough were visited and advised on crime

prevention for make-off-without-payments and provided WDBC stickers.

- **South Worcestershire** - a freight crime event was held at Strensham Services on the M5 to provide awareness to lorry drivers concerning recent theft from articulated trailers.
- **Shropshire** - in total 70 visits have been made to rural locations to offer support, reassurance, and crime prevention advice.
- **North Worcestershire** - setting up of a new cross agency panel to address crime and ASB in Redditch Town Centre known as the Redditch Operational Subgroup. This brings together police, council, the BID, CCTV, Cranstoun and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre.
- **Herefordshire** - working with the force to conduct joint visits to a number of victims of shed burglaries in the village of Weobley.



One of the challenges faced in measuring the effectiveness of rural crime initiatives is that there is no national definition or specific crime type for rural crime. One of the measures I have agreed with the force, in support of my Safer West Mercia Plan, is the volume of rural crimes. I am pleased to see that the need to better understand and more accurately measure rural crime has been recognised by the force. I look forward to seeing this work develop.

Whilst environmental crimes, such as fly-tipping, are often most prevalent in our rural areas, it is an issue which has been raised time and time again by communities across the whole of West Mercia. Not only is fly-tipping unsightly and a nuisance, but it also causes a substantial cost to landowners and is hazardous to our environment and wildlife.

To underline my commitment to developing a partnership response to tackling fly-tipping, I launched a grant round in September 2021 earmarking £100,00 over two years for initiative

to tackle fly-tipping on private land. This initiative is due to complete in October 2023 but some examples of what has so far been achieved are:

- **Herefordshire** - CCTV cameras being deployed and monitored; proposed publicity of using the fly tipping sign on the side of refuse collection vehicles.
- **Telford & Wrekin** - Operation Fly tip continues to develop through a multi- agency approach, working closely with Police, National Farmers Union, Harper Adams university and the Environment Agency to combat fly-tipping.
- **West Mercia Wide Tyre Tagging Scheme** - 107 garages have now signed up to the scheme and 45 fly-tipping incidents have been reported.

Too many people are killed or seriously injured on our roads. During 2022/23, 49 people lost their lives on West Mercia's roads, this is comparable to the number of people who lost their lives in 2021/22.

This is echoed in the sheer volume of correspondence I receive regarding the impact road safety can have on communities. I too agree that more needs to be done to change the culture of driving and put care and responsibility back into the users of roads across West Mercia.

The lasting impact of a serious collision can be devastating for victims, their families, and witnesses of road traffic accidents which is why I have invested approximately £74,000 in RoadPeace. This service provides a support and information service for injured and bereaved victims of serious injury collisions. The scheme, which works within the Victim Advice Line, has shown a steady increase in referrals since the start of the pilot programme at the end of 2020. During 2022/23 there were 95 referrals of which over half were for bereaved victims and 22 witnesses to fatal collisions were offered supported. RoadPeace initiated a very successful round table event in November 2022, which was chaired by the APCC, with the aim of bringing together multiple stakeholders to discuss

support and justice for the victims of road traffic crashes and identify examples of best practice, areas for improvement and how to promote support available. Due to the positive feedback received from the day, a further round table event is being planned for 2023.

“RoadPeace have been amazing from day one. When the police first told me about RoadPeace I did not want to speak to anyone – I felt nobody would understand. I agreed to give it a go, but was clear that if I didn’t like it, I would tell them. I have had someone to talk to who knows where I am coming from. When I talk to those who have not been through it, they may try to understand, but they will never really see it through my eyes. I have been able to meet people who understand and to speak openly with people who know what I am going through.”

Speeding, as well as inappropriate speed, can have a devastating impact on the safety of road users, increasing the risk of a collision and the severity of the consequences. In 2021, my investment saw



a new average speed system go live on the A449 in Worcestershire, made possible by a significant investment from my 2020/21 Road Safety Funding round.

I have continued to invest in the MORSE project, which was granted £229,000 in 2022/23. Road users committing motoring, or criminal offences, are referred to YSS for mentoring support to get to the root cause of the offending behaviour. They are then offered holistic support to prevent further offending. MORSE offers a combination of 1-1 intensive support and short specialised interventions. In 2022/23 190 referrals were made into the project.

“MORSE was very clear and made things very easy to understand, they made me believe we had a mutual respect and helped me to understand my actions and the effects they have on others and appreciating the affects it has on their families. They constantly asked me about my cocaine misuse and supported me in continuing efforts to ensure it is now behind me. I pledge

to continue to clearly understand the risks and dangers of my actions and will continue to respect the law and the safety of others.”

MORSE are in the process of exploring additional funding opportunities and are looking to increase their visibility in other regions nationally. They have conducted discussions with both Warwickshire and The Wirral where they have promoted their model and are looking to see if a pilot project can be put in place. I have allocated £20,000 to each local policing area for my Road Safety Commissioner’s Community Fund (CCF). This can be accessed by local communities to fund projects designed to improve safety on roads.

West Mercia is very fortunate to have many waterways, however this can come at a danger. That is why, as PCC and part of my commitment to reduce harm, I am proud to fund West Mercia Search and Rescue (WMSAR) and Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA).



SARA provides a search and rescue service across a significant part of the West Mercia Police area, primarily searching for missing persons, often in water, and conducts flood rescue and support operations. My £18,000 contribution delivered over the course of three years has been, and will continue to be, used to equip and support an uplift of trained water rescuers from 28 to 40 and food-qualified helms from four to 12 over the next three years. SARA also provides water risks and safety education and awareness having delivered over 30 face-to-face educational events at schools and youth clubs during the first half of the year.

WMSAR provide a world-class voluntary rescue service, for free, to the emergency services. They also engage with partner agencies and the public to deliver proactive and preventative safety measures, in person and online water safety resources, safety patrols and physical messaging boards. In the first six months of the year WMSAR attended nearly 80 events to raise awareness and advocate water safety. I have granted WMSAR

£20,000 to alleviate the fundraising burden placed on its small but dedicated team of volunteers, allowing them to focus on their own training, maintenance and call-outs. The additional capacity provided by this grant has allowed WMSAR to provide West Mercia Police with specialist services including drone, sonar, and quad bike capabilities. It also enabled the charity to develop the Home & Dry water safety course. So far 22,000 people have taken part in this course and are now better protected from harm on our waterways.

Between them the two organisations have responded to over 50 water rescue and missing person incidents. These robust third sector search and rescue capabilities play a crucial role in supporting our police and fire services save lives. Yet the most effective way to reduce harm on our waterways remains prevention and education, which is why I will continue to support organisations such as SARA and WMSAR as part of my shift towards a prevention commissioning strategy.



Reducing re-offending

To continue to break the cycle of crime and re-offending of individuals, as well as lessen the impact this behaviour has on our wider community, it is important that partners work together to provide the right interventions at the right time.

Following a successful application for continuation of Home Office Funding in 2022/23, I secured £487,405.40 to deliver a further 12 months of low to medium risk perpetrator programmes designed to tackle domestic abuse perpetrator behaviours whilst ensuring impacted victims receive support. An additional amount of £103,978.60 was awarded to the DRIVE programme in Herefordshire; designed for high-risk DA perpetrators. The total new award for DA perpetrator provision for 2022/23 was £591,384. As a result of this funding, there continued to be a DA perpetrator programme in every county of West Mercia. This offers vital assistance to communities and challenges perpetrators to change their behaviour to prevent further offending.

The perpetrator schemes across West Mercia for 2022/23, and my contributions, are set out below:

- £219,590.33 to continue co-commissioning of DRIVE across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. DRIVE focuses on priority high-risk or serial perpetrators both male and female aged 16 and over. By addressing perpetrator's behaviour, DRIVE targets the root cause of domestic abuse and improves outcomes for victims and children. For 2022/23, 63 perpetrators were referred in Herefordshire and 125 for Worcestershire. DRIVE continues to see significant reductions in all forms of abuse, with 86% reductions in high levels of physical abuse and 100% reductions in high levels of sexual abuse behaviours at the end of quarter four.
- £288,410.03 to the Richmond Fellowship to deliver the 'My Time' programme across Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire. This is group based domestic abuse perpetrator intervention, which involves working with perpetrators. This service

is delivered in partnership with the Shropshire Domestic Abuse service, who support victims associated with the perpetrators, and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils. The Telford & Wrekin expansion includes specialist BAME/ LGBTQ+ workers designed to work with these groups alongside existing provision.

- In Telford and Wrekin, at Q4 2022/23, four individuals were engaged on group provision and 20 children and young people referrals had been received. In Shropshire, there has been 28 service users engaging in the perpetrator programme overall and 39 service users engaging in the associated victim/survivor support service.
- £190,672 to Cranstoun and West Mercia Women's Aid to deliver the Male and Masculinities project. Male and Masculinities is a group perpetrator programme delivered by Cranstoun across Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This programme is delivered in partnership with West Mercia Women's Aid.

Women's Aid will deliver the victim support provision that supports a linked (ex-) partner to those men accessing the service. Since the start of the programme in 2021, Male and Masculinities has engaged with 182 service users. For 2022/23, 24 cases were closed by Cranstoun, with 92% of these cases reporting that their needs had been met. Since 1 April 2022, 142 victims have been referred to West Mercia Women's Aid.

- £15,000 was also awarded from the Home Office that has funded the completion of a Children and Young People's (CYP) consultation which sought to identify gaps and develop service provision around domestic abuse and healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviour, teenage relationship abuse, child to parent violence and engaged with young people to ensure their voice is heard in what services work for them.

“My quality of life has improved a lot with the support of the case manager. Drive has made a huge difference to my life as I have not re-offended, and it has helped me rationalise my feelings by having learnt better communication skills and to reflect before reacting. I have learnt to be more patient and assess situations to respond in a positive manner. I feel honoured to be involved with Drive and have been able to engage fully and be open and honest without feeling judged. I can move forward with my life now. Things are different to what they were then.” [DRIVE programme attendee, 2022-2023]

“He felt he could talk openly which he has previously struggled to do. He has learnt how to reflect before reacting and is able to regulate his emotions better than he had before. He would assess things and consider from the other persons views and to focus on what was important to all.” [DRIVE victim/survivor feedback, 2022-2023]

“Since my husband attended Men and Masculinities, our relationship has been so much better, both have worked together supporting us in understanding how we communicated with each other, worked with us a family without judgment. I have a new social worker, and I get on with them much better, I feel listened to now. My husband has returned home, my children are feeling better about school, they have a better understanding of what is a healthy relationship, and the CP plan should be stepped down to a CIN at the next meeting. Without the support and programme in place, I don’t think we would be in this situation. This has truly changed our lives for the better. Thank you for everything, my family is now back together, and we are happier than we have been in years.” [Men and Masculinities victim/survivor feedback, 2022-2023]

In January 2023, the Home Office announced new Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Intervention Funding for 2023 – 2025. My commissioning team, in conjunction with the force and local authority representatives, were successful in a bid obtaining £725,744 over the two year period towards a force wide standard to medium risk perpetrator programme. I have committed £100,000 of match funding to this programme. Alongside this provision, I have also committed £1,001,971 towards the roll out of DRIVE in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin for 2023-2025. With this funding being obtained, West Mercia will benefit from a force wide all risk perpetrator programme.

As part of a successful bid to the Home Office domestic abuse perpetrator fund in 2022, I commissioned a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Needs Assessment which was completed in November. This needs assessment was used to identify the needs relating to Domestic Abuse Perpetrators within the West Mercia area and assisted my commissioning team when completing the bid for the Home Office funding in February 2023.

As well as providing continued leadership and governance through my Crime Reduction Board, I have also committed funds to ensure vulnerable offenders in the community receive the support they need. The support provided often enables offenders to address key issues affecting them, such as substance misuse, and to take part in education and learning support to develop new skills and qualifications.

I have continued to support Willowdene Farm with a grant of £103,000 for the LINC project (Local Initiative Nurturing Change). The project enables vulnerable women who are offending, or at risk of offending or leaving the custodial estate, to transform their thinking and behaviour to build purposeful, stable and offending-free lifestyles.

During 2022/23 there were 56 new referrals with 49 women leaving with a positive outcome. Funding from my office allowed for residential bed space, which has been utilised for 41 weeks of the year by four women.

An example of the support offered includes a woman who was referred for a 12-week residential placement to address her alcohol use and associated debt and parenting issues, which had led to her two children being subject to Child in Need plans. She completed a total of 32 qualifications and educational units towards a certificate of employability whilst resident.

Alongside therapy and substance misuse work, she also completed individual work on repayment planning and debt management, as well as participating in ongoing reviews about her children's wellbeing. Since her discharge she is settling well into her new home routine, using new learnt strategies to manage difficulty, and maintaining a positive daily routine for her and her children.

I have also supported Willowdene in a bid to the Ministry of Justice Female Offender Fund. A total of £276,500 was awarded that will facilitate the expansion of their existing services by:

- Launching a new Out of Court Disposal (OOC) option targeting women who are subject to Penalty Notice Disorders and/or Shoplifting Community Resolution Cautions, providing an OOC Coordinator and Assessor to facilitate all aspects of the roll out of OOCs with West Mercia Police and a Multi-skilled Interventions Tutor to deliver structured interventions.
- Providing a Step-down Residential Placement for women released from prison to complement existing residential provision.
- Providing a Parenting Counsellor to support delivery at Willowdene's Family Assessment Centre and liaise with statutory providers (e.g. Social Services and Probation).

The provision of a new OOC will divert women from entering the Criminal Justice System,

reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Using a whole system approach to address the presenting needs of Service Users, their OOCDC interventions will challenge the root causes of offending behaviour and facilitate safe return to the community. Willowdene's OOCDC intervention will target an additional 200 women annually who would otherwise receive cautions or other criminal justice sanctions.

During 2022/23, funding was provided to West Mercia Youth Justice Service to provide timely and effective specialist substance misuse assessments and interventions to young people in the criminal justice system or who are at risk of entering the youth justice system. This was with the intention of reducing the harm caused by substance misuse, assisting young people to recover and reduce the likelihood of offending and re-offending.

The following case study highlights the importance of the intervention.

"XX is an 18-year-old male who recently moved from Birmingham to Worcester and is currently on a six-month referral order relating to Assault offences. XX uses cannabis daily and has done since he was 15 years old. XX has mental health concerns such as ADHD, ASD and is showing behaviours relating to OCD. He was subject to seeing Domestic Violence as a child and parental chronic substance misuse issue, but now lives with his grandfather who provides him with a stable place to stay. He has a close association with friends living in the Stourport area, but this increases his vulnerability to criminal exploitation. Work commenced around harm reduction information and advice around safer use of cannabis, cannabis effects, exploitation, improving sleep and wellbeing. A reduction in cannabis use has occurred and the next steps are to explore motivation to stop using cannabis. Mental health screening has commenced and harm reduction intervention regarding self-harm. Referral has also been completed to education to support the YP with training opportunities." [WMYJS report]



West Mercia Police will move to a new approach in the use of out of court disposals in 2023 as part of the legislative reform to ensure consistency across police forces in the way low-level offences are dealt with out of court. The force has started a phased approach to implement these changes with the final implementation date scheduled for April 2023, however nationally this date has been pushed back until later in the year to provide forces with additional time to ensure everything is in place for a smooth transition. I have been working and will continue to work, closely with the force and stakeholders to ensure that sufficient resources and effort are dedicated to implementing the new approach including having the appropriate intervention projects available.

Partnership working

I firmly believe that partnership working is vital to tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse because these issues are complex and often require a multi-faceted approach to address effectively. No one agency or organisation can

solve these problems alone, and collaboration between different stakeholders is crucial to identifying and implementing effective solutions.

Effective partnerships allow for the pooling of resources, expertise, and knowledge from a range of different organisations, including criminal justice agencies, health services, local authorities, and community groups. By working together, these groups can develop coordinated strategies to prevent and respond to crime, anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse.

Partnerships also provide opportunities to improve communication and information sharing between different organisations, which can help to identify emerging issues and respond more quickly to incidents when they occur. This can lead to more effective prevention and early intervention measures, as well as more coordinated enforcement efforts.

An example of this partnership approach is through my Crime Reduction Board (CRB) which brings together representatives from the police, probation, prisons, local authorities, community safety, and health to tackle key priorities set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan.

I firmly believe that building a more secure West Mercia is not, and cannot be, the sole responsibility of any one person or organisation. The joint working to secure perpetrator services across the whole of West Mercia, and the Safer Communities programmes across West Mercia, demonstrate my commitment to develop stronger partnership arrangements that improve services for our communities and achieve greater efficiencies.

The commitment I have set out in my 2022/23 budget, for both the force and I to move towards a more preventative approach for policing, will require an even stronger focus on partnership working. Again, with the aim to achieve success and deliver better outcomes for our communities.

In 2022/23, as in previous years, I have worked with and provided financial support to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in West Mercia. I hold a bi-annual CSP summit where I meet with CSP Chairs and lead officers from each partnership to discuss key issues and plans.

The Serious Violence Duty introduced within the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 came into effect on 31st January 2023. This duty requires CSP partners to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce serious violence. The legislation also gives PCCs a role to assist local partnerships through the provision of funding and the PCC's convening powers. The CSP summit meetings proved invaluable in establishing how each CSP is meeting the requirements of the new duty, and how I can best assist CSPs through funding, oversight, and governance so that together we can reduce serious violence and make West Mercia a safer place.



Each CSP is provided a ring-fenced budget to be spent on projects that focus on community support, reducing offending, victim care and early intervention and prevention.

During 2022/23 I invested a total of £100K to invest in CCTV capital projects through the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Some examples of how this funding was invested are:

- **North Worcestershire** – continuation of the capital upgrade programme, which has enhanced current monitoring capabilities and future-proofed the CCTV scheme that covers the district areas of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest.
- **Telford & Wrekin** – development of a new purpose-built control suite will complement the growing number of police volunteers who support the day-to-day operation of the control room.
- **Herefordshire** – installation of two IP CCTV cameras and upgrading three CCTV cameras into high definition 4K capability providing much clearer real time and recorded images.

Criminal justice

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is a complex web of partners, roles, budgets, and priorities. I have actively and consistently called for improvements within the criminal justice system, to ensure victims are able to access justice and to make sure offenders are brought to justice. This continues to be the case, as I have taken on the role of Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) to ensure improvements can be made. The LCJB is currently being reviewed to ensure local arrangements are fit for purpose and driving impactful change for victims of crime with clear priorities, a supporting delivery plan and the development of a performance framework. In March 2022, the PCC Review (Part two), carried out by the Home Office, identified LCJBs as a critical vehicle to empower PCCs with the levers to bring together criminal justice partners to effectively tackle crime. As part of this the Ministry of Justice have recently published updated guidance strengthening the role of the PCC.

Court backlogs continue to be an issue impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Bar strikes. The backlog continues to create unacceptable delays for victims, witnesses and defendants in West Mercia and ensuring timely access to justice will continue to be a key focus for the LCJB. The ongoing delays also have a knock-on effect for support services. The force's Witness Care Unit is supporting over 21,000 victims and witnesses every month, placing additional demands against police resources.

To support the work of the Witness Care Unit, I have funded two additional witness care officers to provide support to victims and witnesses on their journey through the CJS. Despite the court backlogs this allows the Witness Care Unit to continue to provide an outstanding service which has resulted in West Mercia having the highest witness attendance rates in the region. In West Mercia, 88% of witnesses attend court compared to a national average of 84%.

To begin to break the cycle of crime and re-offending of individuals, and lessen the impact this behaviour has on our wider community, it is important that partners work together to provide the right interventions at the right time. One of the areas of ongoing scrutiny of my CRB is of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Programme. IOM manages high harm/high risk offenders to reduce the risk of harm they present to West Mercia's communities.

As part of the approach, I have funded an IOM coordinator who is based in HMP Hewell to ensure high risk offenders released back into our communities are managed effectively, again reducing the risk of harm.

The latest data indicates that 58% of offenders on IOM have a substance misuse issues. As SRO for the two CDPs I will ensure that we improve the continuity of care for offenders, ensuring they receive the help and support needed to break the cycle of offending.



Performance and accountability

Monitoring force performance

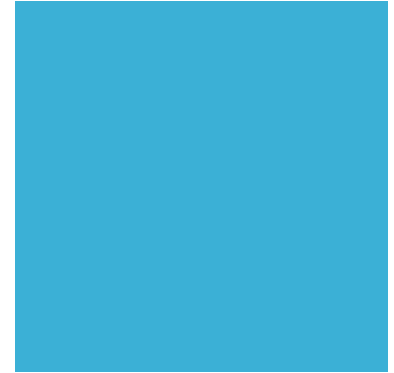
In the last year I have continued to monitor force performance. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly performance reports are produced which help to inform my regular meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior leads. I have had a regular programme of local policing area visits, which enable me to discuss performance and community issues with the local command teams and to engage with officers and staff on an informal basis. I also hold regular meetings with a number of other service leads, including the Superintendent lead for Serious and Organised crime and the Head of the Professional Standards Department.

My team or I attend a range of internal organisational meetings to provide effective oversight of wider force activity. Where appropriate, a member of my office attends any Critical Incident Management Meetings (CIMMs) concerning issues which could impact in the trust and confidence the public has of the force. Anyone

attending a governance meeting provides a briefing note of key issues discussed and identifies any areas where I or the wider team need to act or seek further assurance.

The West Mercia Governance Board is the overarching joint governance meeting between my office and the force and ensures the organisations and their resources are well directed and controlled. Each meeting now includes a deep dive agenda item on a key issue aligned to the Safer West Mercia Plan and force priorities. In keeping with my commitment to be open and transparent I ensure that notes of this meeting are published on my website.

I continue to engage with the force to ensure key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to my Safer West Mercia Plan and my annual budget are integrated into the force performance management framework. This ensures that the performance reports, produced by the force, demonstrate performance against key priorities in my plan and commitments that were made as part



of the budget setting process. The KPIs agreed for next year's budget (2023/24) have been further aligned to the National Policing Priorities (included in the Safer West Mercia Plan) to ensure focus on key areas that impact communities including serious violence, neighbourhood crime and victim satisfaction.

The plan metrics are published on my website along with a statement on how the force is performing in support of the national policing priorities. The KPIs for each annual budget are included in the budget report published on my website.

Holding to account

It is an important part of my role to hold West Mercia Police's Chief Constable to account for ensuring the service the force is delivering is efficient, effective and meets the public's needs. My holding to account programme provides a clear and robust way for me to do this. The holding to account programme for 2022/23 included a focus on quarterly performance data as well as thematic



'deep dives' across the policing portfolios, aligned to key priorities within my Safer West Mercia Plan.

Over the course of the last year, I have held the Chief Constable to account over 17 meetings focusing on a range of areas including: the force's response to increased recording of homicide offences and the Serious Violence Duty; connecting with communities; investigative quality and outcomes; HMICFRS PEEL and Custody inspection findings; delivery of the force's diversity, equality and inclusion strategy and equality objectives; the impact of the 2022/23 budget implementation for communities in West Mercia; and the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford. In each case, actions have been followed up and

performance reviewed in future meetings, with the minutes from each meeting published on my website.

Two of the meetings held this year have been public meetings which were streamed on my Facebook page and informed by questions submitted by members of the public. The meetings focused on key public concerns raised with me through correspondence and engagement with communities. The meeting in June 2022 focused on road safety and the meeting in January 2023 focused on public confidence in policing. It's my role to give communities a voice at the highest level and by hosting the meetings online I am seeking to ensure everyone can be involved in a more open and transparent way. I will be reviewing my approach to these public meetings in 2023/24 to further improve engagement and provide assurance to the communities I represent.

To supplement the formal meetings, I also have a virtual holding to account process. Performance and service issues that do not require a focused

thematic meeting but are areas for which I wish to retain closer oversight, are scrutinised on an ad-hoc basis. This enables me to respond dynamically to emerging performance issues or concerns. The virtual process is run via email and requires the Chief Constable to provide a written response to the concerns I have raised. If I consider further scrutiny is required, the issue can be brought into the formal holding to account meetings. Issues addressed this year have included: the force fleet; vehicle offences in North Worcestershire, the national uplift programme, diversity of new student officer recruits, rape and other serious sexual offences, performance of the Victim Advice Line, local and national HMICFRS inspections on vetting, misconduct and misogyny and the Casey Report.

Each of the holding to account meetings and briefings has enabled me to challenge and support the force to ensure delivery of an effective and efficient service to the public and to ensure compliance with national requirements including the uplift programme and findings from HMICFRS



inspections. The scrutiny I have provided has driven force activity resulting in positive outcomes for communities.

I remain committed to continuously improving the processes I have in place. In January 2023, I commissioned a wholesale review of my holding to account function. As a result of the review, a number of recommendations were identified to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of my holding to account process with a focus on tangible outcomes and service improvement for communities. I will work with the Chief Constable to implement the recommendations from the review in the new financial year.

Independent scrutiny

Throughout the year, HMICFRS has published local and national inspection reports to identify areas of best practice, and areas of improvement across the service. In 2022/23, the inspectorate published three local inspection reports for West Mercia Police.

In April 2022, HMICFRS published two reports specific to West Mercia Police: the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report and a joint inspection of Custody Provision report.

The PEEL report provided a graded judgement on eight areas of policing. The force was graded good for preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and highlighted for its innovative approach to early intervention and prevention. Three areas were graded as requiring improvement: 'Investigating crime', 'Responding to the public', and 'Good use of resources'. This report highlighted a number of areas where the standard is below what our communities and I expect. The force must take action to improve, and I am reassured that this is already happening.

The joint inspection report of West Mercia's custody provision raised serious areas of concern around legal rights, safety, and welfare in West Mercia Police custody. While the findings of this report are not good enough, these are issues that the force and I are already aware of, and action

has been taken to address these issues. The force has developed a Custody Inspection Action Plan to address the areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS and the learning from the inspection has been further utilised by my office to develop an improvement plan for my Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) scheme.

In November 2022, HMICFRS published a report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police. As the inspection took place over 12 months prior to publication of the report (September 2021), HMICFRS did not provide a graded judgement, however three areas for improvement were identified. HMICFRS acknowledged that the force had already addressed some of these areas for improvement prior to publication of the report.

This local report was superseded by the publication, also in November 2022, of a national inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service. Following publication of the local and national report, the force developed an action

tracker to monitor activity underway to address the reports' findings. I am pleased that for over a third of the national recommendations West Mercia Police has either successfully delivered or made significant progress in delivering the required activity.

I have formally held the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the force in respect of all three local HMICFRS reports published in 2022/23. I had two formal meetings with the Chief Constable in May 2022 to review the findings from the PEEL and Custody inspections. More recently, I utilised my virtual HTA process to scrutinise the force's position in relation to the local and national vetting and counter corruption reports.

The review of my holding to account function has identified further opportunities to strengthen my oversight and governance of force performance in respect of HMICFRS findings. On behalf of our communities, I will monitor progress on a quarterly basis, holding the Chief Constable to account, to ensure that improvements identified by HMICFRS are made as swiftly as possible.

To support me in my oversight role, the Joint Independent Audit and Standards Committee provides independent scrutiny of activities, processes, and policies of both the force and my office.

As part of my commitment to the communities of West Mercia to ensure the best outcome for the victims, I chair an independent Out of Court Disposal Panel which reviews criminal cases, dealt with by way of community resolution or caution, to ensure consistency in the outcomes. While the panel, made up of subject matter experts, including senior magistrates, cannot change the outcome of particular cases, it can make recommendations which lead to organisational change in how the force operates moving forward.

When cases do not meet relevant standards, the force is asked to go back and review the case and report on lessons learned. The work of the panel has led to a series of improvements in how the force deals with out of court disposals, including knife crime, domestic abuse and hate crime.

It is important that the outcome of key decisions and discussions are made accessible so that our communities can have trust in me as their PCC, and the police force I hold to account on their behalf. I have achieved this through my Facebook live events, publishing report notes and minutes from a wide number of governance and scrutiny meetings including: the holding to account meetings; the West Mercia Governance Meetings; my Crime Reduction Board; and Victims' Board. In addition, I provide regular performance and activity reports to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, who are responsible for scrutinising my activities and responsibilities.



Reforming West Mercia

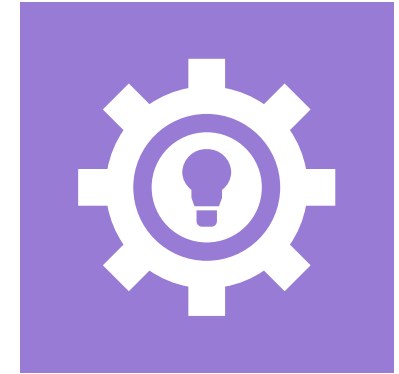
I want the organisation to be one that uses its resources efficiently and effectively so that it maximises its service delivery to the public. Reforming West Mercia Police is a key part of what I want to deliver as PCC and is vital to respond to the current economic challenges, particularly the pay and energy inflation impacting on costs.

The budget for the year was set at £260.5m, an increase of £15.6m on the previous year. With this additional resource, there was a commitment to increase police officer numbers by an additional 125 officers, taking the establishment figure up to 2,456 for 2022/23, representing the highest number of officers the force has seen in the last 14 years. Not only did West Mercia achieve this, but the total additional officers recruited in year was 144, an additional 19 officers above the target.

The additional investment was also part of my focus to solidify the force's future operating model as a single entity. The Alliance with Warwickshire is now fully dissolved, and this was the second year of the estates service being run as an in-

house service under the direct control of my office. These changes are important as they allow the organisation to focus and control the delivery of change and reform. This reform includes the delivery of the third year of the four year digital investment programme. I have also made a significant financial commitment to invest in the physical estate to provide the buildings which are fit for purpose, in the appropriate places to ensure effective delivery of public services across West Mercia. This includes the commencement of building the first new purpose built joint police and fire facility in nine years. The process of reform and transformation must now continue at a pace in West Mercia, so the force can not only respond effectively to changing demands but can also play a much greater role in shaping and reducing demand in the first place.

I will continue to back the force with the resources they need.



Investing in our estate

Our police force needs to be in fit-for-purpose buildings that support the new technology we are introducing. It is also important that, whilst doing this, we are identifying savings and ways of working better and more closely with partners. My work around estates has focused on delivering against those needs.

The insourced estates model enables West Mercia Police and HWFRS to realise their mid- and long-term visions as well as deliver their estates and financial strategies. The new service is already proving to be both a better value for money and enhanced property management service model.

An effective police estate must support the needs of communities and the police force – which should be one and the same. Whether that is around visibility and reassurance, convenient access to services, enabling effective responses to incidents or making sure that best value is achieved for the money given by the public. My Estates Strategy 2021-26 sets out how I plan to deliver on all of

this for both the public and the police force in the coming years.

I am committed to ensuring I am a good custodian of the police estate on behalf of our communities. I will make sure that our police estate gets the right investment, is more sustainable, is situated in the right places, and is aligned to operational needs. This will in turn set our police force up to succeed, both now and in the future.

An effective estates strategy will improve services to the public, not only by ensuring the police have the right resources in the right places, but also by driving efficiencies in our estates portfolio to be able to reinvest in front-line service delivery.

A lot of hard work has already gone in to making sure that West Mercia now has a system and structure that can deliver against this strategy. It is now time to do so and ensure that the police estate is contributing to, and enabling, the best possible policing service as well as helping to deliver a safer West Mercia for our communities. Most recently, an innovative project with Redditch



Borough Council, Worcestershire County Council and HWFRS will see a three-way land swap and purchase allowing for the new police and fire station to be built. This partnership solution enables improvements for vital emergency services, maintains the visible police presence local people want, supports the local economy, and achieves best value for local taxpayers. It is an innovative, forward-thinking approach and I am pleased to be delivering these improvements for the communities in Redditch.

As part of my commitment to moving the estate to a carbon neutral position, I am investing in additional charging infrastructure to support the West Mercia Police electric vehicle fleet. Other carbon reduction initiatives also include the LED Lighting installation project at Kidderminster police station, due for completion in the summer of 2023. I will continue to support the level of investment required to roll out LED installations at the five Divisional Headquarters by November 2024 and the remainder of the estate by

September 2027. In addition, we have seen highly successful partnership working with partners such as town councils and HWFRS, whereby we have delivered co-locations, sharing buildings in Shifnal, Pontesbury and Tenbury Wells respectively, to achieve best value for the estates, whilst maintaining a front-line policing presence within those communities.

The HMICFRS West Mercia Custody report, published in April 2022, highlighted several issues relating to the fabric of the custody estate and the poor facilities in some of the blocks. Whilst these shortcomings have rightly been raised, it is reassuring that these were already identified by estates as part of their quarterly inspections and form part of the remedial programme. Since the report was published, the custody estate and facilities have undergone internal and external assessments. My estates team are delivering against a Custody Improvement Action Plan, devised by the force, and a significant number of the improvements required have already been delivered.

Investing in technology

The next most significant area of investment after additional officers has been in the digital transformation agenda. During 2022/23 the Digital Transformation Programme has delivered a significant upgrade in the support infrastructure for running IT applications, including a significant improvement in resilience through investment in using a Crown Digital Database Hub. With this work undertaken it has enabled the roll-out of M365 to start. The force is now able to look at the wider benefits from the available tools and apps to deliver more effective and efficient services. 2023/24 is the final year of this current programme and will see even more focus on benefits being delivered from the force utilising technology effectively to deliver service.

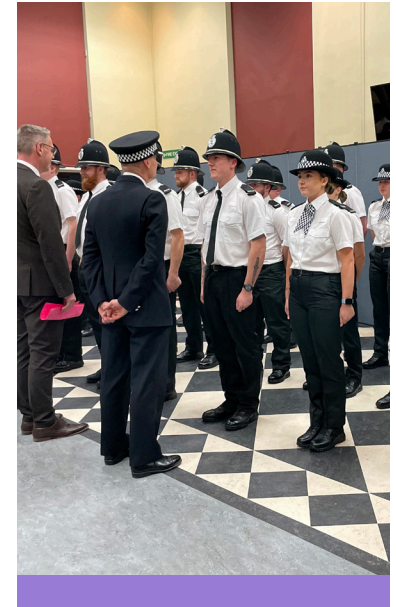
- **£4.752m** - improving the end user experience, ensuring that the force has the equipment, primarily laptops, for all officers and staff (over 4,000) to move onto Microsoft 365.

- **£1.277m** - improving the technology, ensuring that it is fit for purpose to deliver modern, stable digital infrastructure that supports policing.
- **£1.362m** - ensuring key systems and applications work effectively on the infrastructure.

I am proud of the work that has been done to add resilience to West Mercia's digital infrastructure and make services more resilient and reliable. My estates service inherited an antiquated, unconventional and not fit-for-purpose system. They have worked hard to update as much as possible in the last year and improve the system.

Investing in our people

As referred to earlier in this report, communities have told me that they want more police officers that are both visible and accessible. I have committed to delivering that, as well as ensuring that West Mercia Police has the resources it needs and the resilience to cope with changing demands. My 2022/23 budget enabled the force to



successfully deliver the year three national Police Uplift Programme (PUP) target. The uplift has resulted in an extra 125 officers recruited to West Mercia with an uplift across key areas of policing including SNT, local and major investigations and the Professional Standards Department (PSD). Not only did West Mercia Police achieve the target uplift but were able to recruit 19 additional officers, that I have supported, by the end of the financial year. I am committed to ensuring every additional police officer makes a difference to the public.

Whilst I want to see these extra officers operating in our communities daily, I also recognise that we need to ensure that the outcomes for the public are realised, and so have seen the highest proportion of officers in 2022/23 going into Local Investigations, including problem solving. Ensuring that Local Investigations are solving criminal activity, they are also the officers who can see what is happening in local communities and through Problem Solving Hubs they are able to identify long term solutions to specific community criminal activity.

The Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) entry routes into policing were launched in 2019. These entry routes included a degree apprenticeship and degree holder entry programme. Over the last three years, West Mercia Police has designed and successfully delivered these programmes as part of an innovative, award-winning regional collaboration with Staffordshire University, and the other three forces in the West Midlands region. There has been ongoing review of the delivery of the PEQF programme in the region to ensure officers are supported with fit for purpose training. This review work has been supported by my office and I am keen to ensure that there is continuous improvement going into the next phase of the contract.

The National uplift programme, and the new entry routes into policing, have provided a rare opportunity to understand and improve workforce representation across all protected characteristics. West Mercia has made good progress in attracting a more representative workforce across the three

years of the national programme. The data shows female representation is above the national average and the number of officers from an ethnic minority has increased by 18 since 2020.

West Mercia's population has become more diverse since 2011, with the total black and minority ethnic population increasing from 3.8% to 5.8%. The force will be reviewing internal aspirations related to representation in line with this new Census data.

Development and use of a Diversity Dashboard will provide the force with the ability to drill down to function level to see the diversity make up of each department and performance in comparison to the force as a whole. It will be used to identify areas of disproportionality enabling work with different departments to help address specific areas of concern and under-representation.

Activity to improve the diversity profile of the force, includes:

- Developing positive action initiatives to support ethnic minority applicants applying for police staff vacancies.
- Continuing to develop Step Across/Step Up programme plans, including the review of effective practice in other organisations inside and outside of policing.
- Continuing to review base line ethnic minority and gender data in relation to recruitment, leavers and promotions using a 12-month comparative analysis.
- Enhancing methods employed to continue to attract and improve application rates from under-represented groups including targeted recruitment events at community and faith venues and targeted marketing campaigns.
- Developing initiatives to address disproportionality identified in gender and ethnicity pay gap. Areas for review include ethnic minority women in policing and their representation across all ranks and grades.
- Developing the Step Across Programme Work with specialist departments prior to recruitment campaigns to raise awareness of specialist roles with under-represented officers and staff.



- Scoping ideas on developing a 'safe spaces' initiative and providing an opportunity to ask questions, talk openly and not feel uncomfortable to ask anything.

I have continued my own commitment to investing in people; recruiting a graduate policy and commissioning intern to work in my office for 12 months. As part of their placement, they have gained an invaluable insight both into the work of my office and a wide range of force functions, as well as developing valuable workplace skills. I have also published my equality objectives which set out how I will work towards ensuring my own office seeks every opportunity to advance diversity, equality, and inclusion across West Mercia, including internal training and scrutiny of the force's functions under the Equality Act.

The evolution of policing capabilities such as surveillance, analysis, cyber, armed policing and others has always been a core part of how the service operates. The public expects the police to combat key threats using information and command structures that are wholly unaffected

by force boundaries. Capabilities, however, have often developed in single forces. This has meant that policing has grown itself in a way that does not maximise the breadth of talent, resources, and equipment it has at local, regional and national levels.

Collaboration

At the regional level, I work collaboratively with regional colleagues to ensure the four forces meet their obligations under the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). In support of this there are formal collaborations in place across regional organised crime, counter terrorism, police air support, public order training and police entry and training.

Governance of the collaborative activity is via a Regional Governance Group (RGG). The RGG enables oversight and collective decision making in respect of the formal collaborations. It also provides a forum for oversight of national programmes that may have local and regional implications.

This activity is facilitated by three Regional Policy Officers, jointly funded by the four PCCs. They provide policy support and scrutiny of the regional collaborations and lead the coordination of regional criminal justice governance arrangements.

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) sets out those threats which, in the Home Secretary's view, are the biggest threat to public safety and must be given due regard by PCCs when issuing or varying Police and Crime Plans. It supports PCCs as well as Chief Constables to plan, prepare and respond to these threats by clearly linking the local response to the national response, highlighting the capabilities and partnerships that policing needs to ensure it can fulfil its national responsibilities.

A revised version of the SPR was published in February 2023 which provided strengthened detail around the action required from policing at the local and regional level to the critical national threats. The 2023 SPR sets out seven identified national threats. These are as follows: Serious and Organised Crime (SOC); Terrorism; Cyber;

Child Sexual Abuse; Public Disorder and Civil Emergencies. These remain from the 2015 version with the addition in 2023 of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), reflecting the threat it presents to public safety and confidence.

Given this annual report is for the year April 2022 to March 2023, it will not respond in detail to the revised SPR due to the timing of its publication. However, as PCC I am confident I have given due regard to the six threat areas identified in the previous SPR in my Safer West Mercia Plan and in my role holding my Chief Constable to account. VAWG, while not previously contained in the SPR, nonetheless is a key and pressing issue on which I will update in this report and will ensure is prioritised in future iterations.

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) form a critical part of the national policing network to protect the public from SOC. There are still improvements to be made in this area, which I will ensure are delivered within the West Mercia area. The West Midlands ROCU undertook a review



into its operations and size during 2022/23 which resulted in efficiencies of around £2 million. I will continue to ensure that the ROCU offers the best service for the communities of West Mercia tackling organised crime alongside the local force and the National Crime Agency. I saw for myself a wide range of ROCU operations at a 'deep dive' hosted by them in October 2022.

Although West Mercia is a safe place to live, we can still be affected by trends and events that occur nationally and internationally. It is my role to ensure that West Mercia Police and the work of the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU) are effectively tackling these threats locally and that those vulnerable to radicalisation are being safeguarded appropriately.

In 2022/23 the national threat level from terrorism remained at SUBSTANTIAL. Throughout the year, through RGG and my local counter terrorism briefings, I have sought reassurance that the system and processes work effectively to counter the threat and ensure the safety of West Mercia's communities.

In September 2022, myself and the other regional PCCs had an in-depth deep dive into the use of 'Schedule 7' – the powers that allow officers to search and question people who pass through UK borders. I was closely engaged in renewing my oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the powers are being used fairly and proportionately within the region.

In March 2023, myself and the regional PCCs held a third 'deep dive' session with WMCTU focusing on the regional threat and risk picture, the management of terrorist offenders and the lift and shift of Special Branch functions into counter terrorism policing. We were pleased to see that changes have been made to ensure a positive impact on the service to West Mercia's communities.



Reassuring West Mercia's communities

I am clear that our communities not only are safe but feel safe too. People also need to be able to engage with both their police force and I to be confident that we are visible, accessible, understanding of local priorities and able to tackle them effectively.

Our communities expect and deserve the very best from their police service. They want officers that are visible and accessible, protecting them and preventing harm and they want to be confident West Mercia Police has the resources to tackle crime effectively. As part of my budget development for 2021/22, I worked with the Chief Constable to agree a new Local Policing Community Charter. This Charter sets out clear commitments from West Mercia Police as to how it will improve delivery against key community priorities, ensure all the additional resources secured in the budget are fully utilised, and is felt and evidenced in all our communities across West Mercia.

70% of residents feel West Mercia Police understands issues in their community [West Mercia Crime and Perceptions Survey 2022/23]

As part of the Charter commitments, local policing teams have committed to approaching all West Mercia's Town and Parish Councils seeking to establish a contact contract with each, so that local policing priorities are identified, agreed, and addressed on a regular basis. Across West Mercia the top three community concerns identified relate to safer roads (32%), crime (22%) and ASB (11%). These priorities have been used to inform local activity across local teams, and at a strategic level to inform my future holding to account activity for 2022/23.

Whilst it is pleasing to see the force is responding to local concerns, there is still much more to do to create further opportunities so the public can raise concerns, provide feedback, be involved, and help shape policing.



I was therefore pleased that Neighbourhood Matters was launched by West Mercia Police in 2021, as it enables residents, businesses, and community groups across West Mercia to find out more about what is happening in their local community. It also gives them the opportunity to contact police officers and local policing teams directly so they can raise any concerns and provide feedback. My priority is to maximise this development for the benefit of communities.

The messages people receive are targeted and based on their location and preferences selected by an individual. The public can sign up for local updates from their neighbourhood policing team or join a number of specialised community interest groups such as Business Watch, wildlife crime and crime prevention. Since its launch, over 29,000 people have signed up for alerts; this is an additional 12,000 people compared to 2021/22. West Mercia currently rank 1st out of 30 forces for sign up volumes as of February 2023.

As PCC, I am clear that our communities demand and deserve effective and timely communication around crime and community issues in their area. I am therefore pleased to see that this service has been successfully launched by the force and welcomed by the public. I have heard loud and clear from the public that they want their police force to be more visible and accessible – Neighbourhood Matters is just one way of achieving that.

Communities have told me that they still don't feel their police service is visible or accessible. Whilst West Mercia Police has made progress, it's important we build on this. I am therefore committed to doing all I can to improve the overall confidence and perceptions the public have. My budget for 2022/23 saw a further 125 officers taken on in West Mercia. These additional officers will provide increased visibility for communities.



I welcome feedback from communities from correspondence that comes into my office. In the space of a few months I received a large number of correspondence about the delays people were facing in getting their firearms license. This resulted in me investing £200k to get backlogs down and ensure the force is providing a service that is both safe and timely for the public.

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Independent custody visitor scheme

My Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Scheme sees trained volunteers make unannounced visits to all West Mercia's custody suites to check on the welfare and treatment of detainees. I greatly value the work of the volunteers and I am always grateful for their contribution.

The scheme, which is part of my statutory duty, has undergone many changes over the last 12 months, informed in part by the HMICFRS Custody report published in April 2022. The report called for clear improvements which the force is managing with an action plan. The action plan has been shared with all members of the ICV scheme who

also receive ongoing updates from custody to ensure the improvements are being delivered. Any concerns raised by ICVs are escalated to the Head of Custody for resolution.

Alongside this, my office has devised a new reporting form from ICVs which has now been embedded and ensures I have more robust oversight of custody activity, including custody record checks. My ICV co-ordinator has assisted in internal dip sampling and custody inspection activity to continue to enhance the force's custody provision.

Although membership of the scheme has reduced slightly over the 12 months, recruitment drives have encouraged new applications ensuring a stable number of members that are more representative of the communities I serve. I am pleased that over the course of the last 12 months I have recruited 10 new volunteers to join my scheme.

The commitment of my volunteers is evidenced by the increase in visits in 2022/23. During 2022/23 the ICVs carried out 222 visits; a 10% increase compared to 2021/22. In total, 47% of detainees consented to meeting with the ICVs.

Ethical policing

89% of residents said they trust West Mercia Police (WMP), 89% believe WMP treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are and 84% believe that WMP act with integrity [Quarter 3 West Mercia Public Perception Survey 2022/23]

During 2022/23 the force has seen a sustained increase in the number of misconduct cases against officers and staff, rising from 107 in 2021/22 to 134 in 2022/23. The increase has been linked to a range of factors including an increased national focus on officer conduct and growing confidence in the wider workforce to report poor behaviour. I scrutinise and monitor the force's approach to tackling misconduct through my quarterly performance meetings with the force's Professional Standards Department (PSD), reviewing recorded

conduct matters, suspensions and the outcome of disciplinary matters.

In January 2023 I formally held the Chief Constable to account in respect of misconduct, misogyny, and vetting; ensuring that West Mercia Police is addressing the recommendations identified in local and national HMICFRS reports and is on track to check all officer details against national police databases by March 2023 as directed by the Home Office. My budget for 2022/23 included an uplift of staff into PSD to ensure that the right checks are being carried out on all officers, staff and others working with or for the police, to root out any individuals not suitable for such a trusted role in our community. My budget for 2023/24 will further strengthen the force's capabilities through the introduction of new monitoring software to assist in early identification of potential corruption, criminal and misconduct offences.

It is important that when the public speak to the force or I we react, and we put it right when it needs to be put right. Whilst the number



of complaints has decreased in 2022/23, our communities deserve to know that their concerns will be dealt with quickly and appropriately. As well as close liaison with the force's PSD to respond to correspondence from the public, I review performance in respect of complaints as part of my quarterly performance meetings with PSD to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and complainants receive the service they need.

To further improve transparency around complaints, and to help provide the public with the confidence they need to trust the police to always do the best they can, I now publish annual data relating to police complaints on my website, as well as an assessment of how I hold the Chief Constable to account for the complaints function.

Since February 2020, I have had responsibility for carrying out complaint reviews which were previously referred to the force. The number of reviews has grown from 98 in 2021/22 to 116 in 2022/23. An independent and qualified external body has been appointed to assess the reviews

on my behalf, although the final decision on the outcome remains with me.

The additional oversight, that the complaint review process brings, enables me to identify strategic themes and organisational learning for the force. The findings from the review process have been used to inform training inputs within PSD and to implement new processes to improve the service provided to the public.

Public engagement

I have consistently worked to ensure that I am the voice of the public in policing. I am therefore pleased that the public continue to engage with my office, raising concerns and queries that allow me to help and identify solutions if necessary. This year saw 1,667 pieces of correspondence logged. Many of which led to engagements in areas that saw a number of concerns, or phone calls with correspondents who were disappointed with the service they received.

Supported by my Deputy PCC and two Assistant PCCs, there have been 199 engagements. This includes a variety of meetings, such as with the force, partners, public and other organisations. I am carrying out a piece of work around community mapping to ensure I understand the diverse and widespread communities of West Mercia and all possible ways of engaging with them have been explored.

In the last year I have issued more than 141 public comments or articles in order to ensure local communities are aware of my views, decisions and updates that are of interest to those living in West Mercia.

In the last year I have continued to see an increase to the amount of interaction on my social media platforms. Over the year, on Facebook I saw an increase of 158 followers and 174-page likes, on Instagram I have seen an increase of 85 and on Twitter there has been a continual increase with 219 followers. I also use YouTube and LinkedIn, which are both seeing a steady increase since I started using the platforms.

Following West Mercia Police joining Neighbourhood Matters, I too have joined the messaging system to allow communities to receive information about my work as PCC and what I am doing in their area. There are 12,368 people signed up to the platform.

I also continue to issue a monthly resident's newsletter, which has 1,903 people signed up to it. This sits alongside a bespoke MPs newsletter, which is issued to the 13 MPs that cover the West Mercia area. This is to ensure they are aware of information that may be relevant to constituents they engage with.

An audit was recently carried out by the Home Office to ensure my website is fully compliant with accessibility legislation. Where possible, all documents and pages can be read with a screen reader. My website is continually audited to ensure it contains the relevant statutory information and, for transparency, all appropriate decision notices, financial information, office information, strategy documents and FOI disclosures are published.

In the last year, just over 23,572 different users have visited my website, an increase on the previous year. There were 32,285 individual sessions and 67,752 page views.

My commitment is that I will build on the amount of engagement I have across all platforms.

In order to capture the engagements via social media, the website and other platforms, I continue to produce a quarterly metrics document that details the activity from the four months. My team also carries out a monthly metrics meeting to understand how engagement with the public can be improved.

I have been pleased to work in partnership with others to run campaigns such as: 'Pin your poppy', which saw communities take part in creating poppies to pin onto one of six Unknown Tommy statues; Safer & Stronger Communities, in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council; and awareness raising of nitrous oxide with Mark Garnier MP and BBC Hereford & Worcester.

Public consultation

Similar to the previous year, I carried out two consultations around the setting of my budget. As part of my commitment to ensure I am capturing views from the public, I provided a platform for people to share their concerns around crime and the visibility and accessibility of West Mercia Police. This once again involved getting out and about talking to people on the streets, particularly for those who didn't have access to the online surveys.

The earlier survey allowed me to capture people's views at a very early stage, which I then used to inform the decisions I made around the budget and how the money would be spent.

In addition to the Town and Parish Council and Confidence surveys, I will be launching a 'Community Conversation' consultation which will aim to capture views on a wide range of subjects.



Our resources

The 2022/23 total revised net revenue budget for West Mercia was £260.5m, which is funded through a combination of central government grants and council tax income. There was also a contribution from reserves to fund transformation and improvement projects. At the end of the year, the revenue budget was underspent by £7.784m.

The position on 'Office of the PCC' and 'Force' spends in 2022/23 are shown below:

Area of spend – under/(over) spending	£m
Policing	6.299
Office of the PCC	1.488
Total net underspend in 2022/23	7.717

During 2022/23 we, as a community, moved from a time when we were largely restricted due to a pandemic, but are now facing different restrictions as financial strain from cost-of-living pressure is placed on the public. This has impacted communities across the country, including West Mercia, and will influence the challenges policing faces in every conceivable way.

The Government is now facing the challenge of not only needing to address the debt gap but deal with the rising cost of inflation, which reached a 41-year high of 11.1%. This inflation has been driven by surges in the cost of energy and food.

The increases in energy and food prices have been worsened by Russia's war in Ukraine. The UK is now facing much higher energy price caps and rising costs in food – which is placing strain on families, businesses, and public services.

These cost pressures have already had an impact on current year budgets. The pay award of £1,900 to all officers and staff is equivalent to a 5% increase, which is significantly higher than the 2% which was budgeted. It is also outside the upper limit of 3%, which was modelled as part of risk assessment in the 2022/23 budget. The force has had to manage the impact of these additional costs carefully through the year.

In 2022/23 the force successfully recruited an additional 144 officers, funded from the Home Office as part of the government core settlement.



This is an additional 19 above the original target. The officers have been going through a significant amount of training as part of their induction, before being deployed to operational activities, of which most roles are in Local Investigations and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

During 2022/23 I continued to work closely with many partners across West Mercia, providing financial support and assistance to a number of local projects and initiatives to protect people from harm. Through the work of my office, an additional £1.6m of funding has been accessed from the Ministry of Justice and Home Office on top of the core funding of £2.5m that we receive. I have focused on ensuring that this additional allocation has been spent on those who need it most, particularly on those suffering domestic abuse and sexual violence.

The Outturn Report on the financial position in relation to the budget is showing relatively small underspends across all categories of expenditure.

The highest being £2.479m underspend on the purchase of goods and services from external bodies. Considerable investment has been placed in information and communications technology (ICT) to improve the aging infrastructure. Slippage in the delivery timetable, compounded by staff vacancies reducing the ability to deliver all the planned work in year. There were also savings from the change and transformation programme. The majority of which is due to capitalisation of Project Manager costs related to specific projects has been higher than originally anticipated, reducing the burden on in year revenue costs.

There was also employee costs savings of £0.988m for police officers and £1,671m for police staff. This is due to a combination of factors around the profile of when additional officers were recruited, higher than estimated leavers in a year, less employees joining pension scheme, length of time to undertake vetting of new starters and decisions around whether vacant posts needed to be recruited to given other budget pressures. Pay



awards have impacted the level of underspend reported, and overtime costs have been higher as a result of offsetting some of the reported underspend.

Underspends have also been generated through reduced cost of borrowing as capital programme has been lower than estimated, reducing the need to pay interest and make provision for repayment. Also delays in the delivery of a number of commissioned activities with providers, through third party payments, has reduced expenditure in year. Requests for funding to be rolled forward for several schemes have been made.

The force had a plan to deliver £6.037m of savings as part of ensuring delivery of a balanced recurring budget. Savings of £6.091m were delivered. Whilst nine of the identified savings, totalling £0.345m, in the plan were either not delivered in full or were not viable, alternative in year savings have been

delivered.

Use of reserves

At the start of the financial year, West Mercia had a balance of £18.345m of reserves. During the year, £2.139m of reserves were utilised to fund one off projects. These include:

- £1.125m to support the force budget for 2022/23.
- £0.225m to support the investigation into maternity deaths at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust.
- £0.279m for one off investment in the estates.
- £0.389m on supporting my commissioning activities with external partners.

During the year, an additional £1.842m has been transferred from revenue budget into reserves, from unspent allocations to provide additional flexibility to the PCC to support the 2023/24 budget implementation given the impact wider economic conditions and inflationary increases are



having.

As reported above, the outturn is an underspend of £7.784m, although £0.852m relates to not drawing down reserves. Therefore, there is a balance of £6.932m from the outturn position to allocate to reserves.

The PCC is looking to use £3.8m of this to support the revenue budget in 2023/24 to give the force the flexibility to control its costs in a planned and efficient way, and to ensure that it can deliver a balanced budget. There are also several elements from specific underspends that support reserves. In total, £2.3m is being transferred from the underspend. This includes:

- £0.400m of underspend relating to Youth Justice Service going to a ring-fenced reserve.
- £0.612m of underspend from Road Safety team transferred to the road safety reserve to fund future initiatives.
- £0.818m of underspends relating to commissioning activity which is transferred to the

commissioning reserve.

- £0.473m of underspends relating to the estates planned programme which is transferred to the infrastructure reserve.

This leaves £2.0m, which I have allocated to offset the capital costs, reducing the need to borrow and the impact that this will have on the revenue budget over the medium to long term.

Due to the requirement to account for provisions in the balance sheet, an additional £1.2m was allocated from the underspend report. Now that this sum has been recognised in the balance sheet as a liability, I have reduced the insurance and legal claims reserve, freeing up additional resource to support key initiatives in the year to support my Safer West Mercia Plan.

The balance on reserves, to be carried forward into 2023/24, is £7.5m of general fund reserves (less than 3% of the revenue budget) and earmarked reserve of £17.6m. I have made these decisions to ensure that the Chief Constable and I can meet statutory responsibilities, manage critical risks, and

contribute towards key strategic initiatives.

Capital position

To ensure the force remains both effective and efficient, it is undergoing significant transformation, much of which is reliant on capital investment. During 2022/23 there was a total of £16.035m of capital expenditure, this includes:

- £2.1m which has been spent on our estates. This includes the start of construction of the new police station for Redditch. There was also work undertaken to upgrade the Hindlip site including the Dog Section.
- There was expenditure of £8.0m in ICT projects to transform them to continue the investment required to make them fit-for-purpose for the future.
- £1.5m has been spent on transformation and change projects, such as fleet telematics to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the assets that we use and support the delivery of

effective front facing services.

- £2.8 relates to the purchase of police vehicles to replace those vehicles that have reached the replacement criteria.
- The remaining £1.635m has been invested in replacement of essential ICT equipment, road safety and other equipment which the force needs in order to be able to provide the appropriate response to the public.

There is an ongoing ambitious plan to invest in the infrastructure and estate of West Mercia, as I must ensure that the force continues to remain fit for purpose. The 2023/24 budget includes £28.6m of planned expenditure.

Looking forward

The setting of the 2023/24 budget has provided a significant challenge to West Mercia Police and I to be able to continue to operate effectively within the finances available, and to deliver the services that the public expect, ultimately putting them first. I have set a budget of £260.485m, which is



the funding envelope available. An increase of expenditure of £25.1m. Undoubtedly the impact of inflation has meant that the force have had to deliver a significant number of efficiencies in how they look to spend the available budget, but the budget includes £8.355m of savings that the force has been asked to deliver, to ensure that policing in West Mercia is delivering value for money.

I am pleased that the Government has recognised the challenges policing faces and provided increased funding in the 2022/23. I am also pleased that I have been able to fund the recruitment of an additional 40 police officers during the financial year. I am also committed to ensuring that the total investment in new officers over the last three years is now providing the professional police service expected by the public. I have obtained commitment from the Chief Constable that most of these officers will then be placed in roles which will have a positive outcome for visibility and accessibility of front-line policing.

Commissioning and grants

I commission services related to victims, community safety and crime reduction. My Commissioning and Grants Strategy, which is reviewed and published on an annual basis, provides further information on the approach taken. It also sets out how the commissioning of services, or awarding of grants have followed consistent, transparent processes so that all parties, including our communities can have confidence in how decisions involving public money are being taken.

I am committed to investing in local, outcome-focused interventions and projects that demonstrate value for money. Working collaboratively with other parties is one way of maximising funding opportunities and making best use of public funds. In support of this I have expanded existing joint commissioning arrangements with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) for the DRIVE project, with Herefordshire Council also now providing funding.

Further examples of joint commissioning or partnership funding include:

- Joint commissioning with Worcestershire County Council for IDVA and local DA support services contracts.
- Joint commissioning with Herefordshire County Council and Worcestershire County Council of the DRIVE DA perpetrator programme.
- Working with regional NHSE/I and PCCs to re-commission the Adult SARC for a further six years.
- Working in partnership with all four top tier local authorities to jointly commission the Men & Masculinities and MyTime – DA perpetrator interventions across West Mercia.
- Working with all Local Authorities across West Mercia to implement the Safer Communities programme.
- Regional co-commissioning of the DIVERT pre-arrest service.

- Working in partnership with responsible authorities within the Serious Violence Duty to facilitate the commissioning of services via the Home Office grant.

In 2022/23 I invested approximately £10.9m across more than 100 commissioned services and projects I support, targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and re-offending throughout West Mercia.

The allocation of funds for 2021/22 includes:

- £5.5m allocated to victim services, including £0.854m on the Victims Advice Line operated by the police.
- £1.3m was spent on early intervention and prevention diverting people away from crime, including £0.364m on Rural Crime and We Don't Buy Crime officers in the police.
- £0.977m was spent on community-based programmes, including CCTV monitoring, night-time economy support and youth outreach programmes.
- £0.229 on road safety initiatives.



The remaining investment was directed towards schemes to further reduce re-offending such as drug and substance misuse projects.

Commissioners Community Fund (CCF)

Through my CCF fund I have provided £150,000 to West Mercia's Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) with the autonomy to support local initiatives relevant to their policing area. Examples of CCF funding include:

Herefordshire

- £1,000 to Fit and Fed boxing holiday club, providing youths with a safe environment to encourage health and fitness.
- £2,400 for Be Bright Be Seen to support local cyclists, old and young, across the south of Herefordshire and ensure they are safe on the roads.
- £3,000 for Generation Z to provide a safe zone for vulnerable/disadvantaged/socially excluded young people in Hereford along with the

prevention of young people getting into minor crime or drug misuse with good support, positive activities and opportunities to get creative and expressive.

- £1,000 to Bike Track for a bike track which will be a positive diversion for youth ASB in the local area of Kington, Hereford.
- £2,407 to Hope Cople for the purchase of one speed indicator device (SID) to be moved around the parish.
- £3,200 to Young Driver Experience for young people to have the opportunity to learn basic skills about driving a car and car maintenance. As well as understand the importance of being safe drivers as they start to learn to drive, understanding the impact of road traffic collisions through consequences of their choice. Ultimately to enjoy being safe drivers for their future.
- £672 for speed reduction in Lyonshall Parish to fund solar panels for SID devices.



North Worcestershire

- £2,200 for Knife Crime Youth Engagement to visit local schools and colleges to engage with young people and deliver Anti Knife Crime presentations which also includes information related to County Lines activity.
- £2,000 for the Parish of Wolverley and Cookley to install a vehicle activated sign to address the issue of speeding.
- £1,500 to Steer Clear - following the successful implementation of Steer Clear, a workshop will roll out to high schools for delivery to all students in years 9 and 10 in an assembly type situation with a view to providing education and diversion to reduce knife related crime in young people 10 to 17 years old.
- £4,440 for Night Time Economy and Licensing to increase confidence for vulnerable members of the community when patrolling the Night Time Economy by providing them with a personal attack alarm or drug/alcohol awareness pack as appropriate.

- £5,000 to Lords Taverners (shared with South Worcestershire) for Wicketz Worcestershire - a community cohesion programme targeted at 8–19 year-olds, using cricket to engage difficult-to reach young people.
- £1,851 for VAS in Bewdley to purchase and install a fixed solar powered vehicle activated device.
- £2,875 for Maverick Sounds (Your Ideas Rap Project) to provide diversionary activities for youths involved in ASB and other criminal behaviour as well and those vulnerable to exploitation. To break the negative cycle of criminality through music.

South Worcestershire

- £2,500 for Wicketz Worcestershire which is a community cohesion programme targeted at 8–19 year-olds, using cricket to engage difficult-to reach young people.
- £3,550 to South Worcestershire Primary Schools Tag Rugby Programme. The aim of this project is to strengthen relationships

between local policing teams and children within the community and widened that to a further relationship with other elements of the community.

- £2,500 to Rural Crime Prevention and Community Reassurance for a thermal imaging camera to reduce the number of rural crimes in vulnerable communities and increase public protection, reducing threat, harm and risk.
- £1,946 for Crime Prevention & Victim Reassurance to provide additional support for safeguarding victims following a crime risk survey to their homes. These crime prevention items provide additional reassurance and help to reduce anxiety while in their homes.
- £600 to Steer Clear for education and diversion to reduce knife related crime in young people 10 to 17 years old.
- £2,410 for the installation of VAS in Upton upon Severn.

- £1,550 to Ripple for the purchase of VAS in the village.
- £2,390 for Safer Village (Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish) to purchase a speed indicator device and Bluetooth data protection unit.
- £1,045 for speed awareness in Droitwich Spa, providing VAS for Celvestune Way in Droitwich.
- £1,100 to Broadway for the purchase of a mobile vehicle activator sign.
- £2,371 for road safety equipment - 12 'Police Officer Parking Buddy Kiddie Cut Out Pavement Signs'.

Shropshire

- £5,000 for Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew to provide up to 50 schools in the Shrewsbury and Oswestry area with the opportunity to attend a Police and Crime Commissioner's sponsored safety education event with 13 safety scenarios for up to 1,500 children.

- £7,000 for intervention and prevention around youth offending in football. This pilot project seeks to introduce a diversionary process with the police and Shrewsbury Town Football Club working in partnership. It will deliver targeted interventions with these young people to prevent them being criminalised and developing into a life of crime.
- £3,000 for Project Heart to help teenagers who are exhibiting a need for special support.
- £1,930 to Young Cadets - working with a wide range of year 6 pupils within the school setting covering topics that include ASB, communication, road safety, missing people, security and forensics.
- £3,000 for traffic calming in Brockton, Much Wenlock to purchase a vehicle activated sign and pole to fix it onto.
- £1,000 for the town of Market Drayton to reduce speeding traffic and help fund the purchase of two VAS, one for each entrance of the town.

- £1,511 to Selattyn & Gobowen for the purchase of two VAS, one for each entrance of the town.
- £2,725 to Ellesmere Speed Awareness for the purchase of VAS for A495 & A528 Grange Road by Ellesmere Town Council.
- £1,005 - Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign - Purchase a Radar mobile speed sign for use along the B4368 from Munslow to Broadstone.

Telford & Wrekin

- £3,500 for Black History month by delivering workshops in schools to improve community cohesion within increasingly diverse communities, through raising awareness and enhancing social engagement across ethnic boundaries.
- £3,200 to Freedom Fitness Youth Project - the project is made for 11-18 year olds struggling with low mental and emotional wellbeing who may be vulnerable to crime and gangs. This provides them with practical support by way of physical activity helping them cope with

pressures they face on a day to day basis, therefore diverting them from crime.

- £2,000 for the Queen's Jubilee Celebration - a cultural family fun day event celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the commemoration of the Windrush Generation influence in the community and surrounding areas over the last 70 years.
- £2,000 for Crimestoppers to increase awareness in young people of the dangers of knife crime and youth violence. Educating them on how to report issues anonymously if they feel they or an associate are at risk or if they have witnessed a crime.
- £4,780 for Anti-Knife/Sharps Crime to deter and detect knives and sharp bladed objects. To instill public confidence working in partnership with a number of late-night venues/nightclubs.
- £3,500 for Wellington to purchase three additional solar powered, speed indicator devices (SIDs).

- £2,753 to Lawley for speed indicator devices to SIDs for speed awareness.

Contact your Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion:

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This document is available in other formats,
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WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 JULY 2023

2023/24 ANNUAL BUDGET METRICS REPORT

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider this report.

Background

2. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Police and Crime Panel with an overview of the key performance indicators (KPIs) agreed by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable as part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.
3. The report also sets out the mechanisms in place to monitor performance against the KPIs to ensure service improvements are delivered for communities in West Mercia.

2023/24 Key Performance Indicators

4. The KPIs for the annual 2023/24 budget are set out in Table 1 and were included in the Budget Report published on the PCC's website. The PCC and Chief Constable have made a clear commitment to pursue continuous improvements against these KPIs.
5. The metrics focus on crimes that have the greatest impact on communities, including traditional police and crime measures, neighbourhood crime, serious violence, domestic abuse and criminal justice outcomes for victims; as well as metrics that enable robust financial management.
6. The metrics are also aligned to Safer West Mercia Plan priorities and national Beating Crime Plan priorities, against which the force is committed to delivering improvements.

West Mercia Police Performance Management Framework

7. To provide assurance that progress is being made against each KPI, there has been a commitment from Chief Officers to integrate the budget metrics into the organisation's performance management framework (PMF).
8. This will ensure that leaders at all levels of both organisations are sighted on the performance priorities for the year; and that there is regular oversight and scrutiny through existing performance reports and internal governance meetings. This will also enable the Police and Crime Panel to better monitor the outcome of the budget investment.

9. The PCC's Policy Team has worked closely with the Force's Strategy, Planning & Insight (SP&I) Department to incorporate the budget metrics into the West Mercia Police PMF, and progress to date is set out in Table 1.
10. There are 25 KPIs in total. 23 KPIs can be reported on regularly (i.e., excluding the annual finance metrics). Of these 23 KPIs:
- 64% (14) have already been integrated into Force performance reports or existing PCC products. Most of these metrics are available within the Q4 2022/23 Quarterly Report which is shared with the Panel. This includes data on satisfaction, crime volumes, confidence, call handling and response times.
 - The Force has provided assurance to the PCC that the outstanding metrics are being addressed and will be included in future Quarterly Reports.
 - Of note, the Q4 2022/23 Quarterly Report already includes comprehensive data on Action Taken outcomes¹. However, following a request from the PCC's Policy Team, from Q1 2023/24, this data will be disaggregated to enable the Panel to specifically monitor outcome 1 and 1A as agreed as part of the budget setting process.
 - Work is underway internally to develop the KPI related to reducing the carbon footprint associated with policing. Once a meaningful indicator is agreed, the Force is committed to including this data in the quarterly report.
 - At the time of writing / publication, the Q4 2022/23 report is the most recent available for the purpose of reporting back to the Panel.

¹ Proportion of offences resolved via: Charge/Summons, Caution, Taken Into Consideration, Penalty Notice for Disorder, Cannabis Warning, Community Resolution

Table 1. 2023/24 Budget KPIs

Safer West Mercia Plan	Improvement Areas	Key Performance Indicators	Integration into Force PMF
Putting victims and survivors first	Victim satisfaction	% of victims satisfied with service	Already included in Quarterly Report
Building a more secure West Mercia	Total recorded crime	Volume of total recorded crime	Already included in Quarterly Report
		TRC - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Violent crime	Volume of violence with injury	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Violence with injury - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Rape	Volume of rape offences	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Rape - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Robbery	Volume of Robbery offences	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Robbery - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Residential burglary	Residential Burglary	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Residential Burglary - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Vehicle crime	Volume of vehicle crime	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Vehicle crime - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
	Domestic abuse	Volume of domestic abuse	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Domestic abuse - % outcome 1 & 1A	To be included from Q1 2023/24
Reassuring West Mercia's	Call handling	% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds	Already included in Quarterly Report

Communities		% of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds	Already included in Weekly Report; Quarterly Report sets out average wait times for 101 to give a more detailed overview of performance.
	Public confidence	Overall Confidence - % of respondents that agree or strongly agree they have confidence in local policing	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Visibility - % of respondents that report seeing a police officer or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) at least weekly	Being considered for inclusion in the Quarterly Report; this metric is already included in the SMSR report published on the PCC's website and integrated into an internal Confidence report for the DCC's Confidence Board attended by the PCC's Chief Executive.
Reforming West Mercia	Emergency response times	Median Grade 1 response time	Already included in Quarterly Report
		Median Grade 2 response time	Already included in Quarterly Report
	Finance	Financial Outturn is within the agreed budget	This is an annual figure that will be reported on via the Treasurer at the end of the financial year.
		Savings plan is delivered (as part of achieving financial outturn)	As above, with quarterly oversight through Money Matters reports to West Mercia Governance Board.
		Unqualified annual VFM conclusion is received from the External Auditors	This is annual and will follow the statement of accounts and will be reported on via the Treasurer.
	Environment	Reducing the carbon footprint associated with policing	To be included in Quarterly Report when a meaningful indicator has been developed by the Force.

Assurance and Accountability

11. Within the Budget Report, the PCC committed to reviewing performance against the budget KPIs as part of his Assurance and Accountability (A&A) programme² in 2023/24.
12. As set out in the Police and Crime Panel Activity and Performance Monitoring Report, in January 2023 the PCC commissioned a wholesale review of his holding to account function. A number of recommendations were identified to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the holding to account process with a focus on more robust performance management and delivering tangible outcomes and service improvement for communities.
13. A key recommendation from the review was to reinstate formal quarterly meetings with the Chief Constable with a focus on performance in relation to:
 - Local performance priorities (Safer West Mercia Plan and Budget KPIs),
 - National policing priorities (Beating Crime Plan metrics), and
 - Local and national HMICFRS inspections.
14. This will ensure greater oversight and scrutiny of performance against key metrics.
15. As part of the local performance priorities agenda item the Chief Constable will be asked to provide an assessment of Force performance against specific KPIs based on the data published in the latest quarterly performance report. The KPIs will be determined based on previous scrutiny activity, performance trends, emerging issues, and professional knowledge.
16. The first performance meeting under the new process was 5 June 2023. The Chief Constable has been asked to provide an assessment of performance in relation to the following KPIs:
 - Outcomes (budget metric, Safer West Mercia Plan metric)
 - Response times (budget metric, Safer West Mercia Plan metric)
 - Unresourced incidents (Safer West Mercia Plan metric)
 - Any other performance areas as determined by the Chief Constable.
17. The quarterly performance A&A meetings will be supplemented by a specific thematic A&A meeting focused on the impact of the 2023/24 budget investment. This meeting has been scheduled for March 2024. A thematic budget meeting has been held annually since 2020 and enables the PCC to review and scrutinise the force's delivery against the commitments made in the budget, including an end-of-year assessment of performance against the KPIs.
18. The agenda and notes for each A&A meeting will be published on the PCC's website after the meeting has taken place.

² Previously referred to as the PCC's Holding to Account programme.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Financial Implications

None.

Legal Implications

None

Equality Implications

None.

Supporting Information

None

Contact Points for the Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website](#)



WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 JULY 2023

POLICE & CRIME PLAN ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider the report.

Background

2. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel (PCP) with an overview of activity undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in support of his Safer West Mercia Plan and provide an update on police performance.

Delivery plan and assurance

3. A delivery plan is used to support monitoring and assurance of progress against individual elements within the plan and is scrutinised at the PCC's monthly governance meetings.
4. Examples of recent activity in support of the Safer West Mercia Plan's four key objectives, are set out in the following sections.

Putting victims and survivors first

Domestic Abuse

5. The PCC commissions West Mercia Women's Aid to provide an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service, to support victims experiencing domestic abuse. For the 22/23 year, the service has seen a continuous increase in referrals, up to 2,238. 72% of those referred engaged with the service, and 98% of those leaving the service reported cessation or reduction in domestic abuse.
6. West Mercia Women's Aid are also commissioned to provide a service to support children and young people affected by domestic abuse. The service received 386 referrals during 22/23, with 98 during January to March. The service has supported 162 children and young people through their group programmes and 1:1 support. It has been noted that there is a growing number of children aged 4-7 years old requiring support.

Sexual Violence

7. The Independent Sexual Violence Adviser service provided by West Mercia Rape Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) and Axis Counselling received 1622 referrals during 2022/23, with referrals growing each quarter. The service is also seeing an increase in existing clients currently being supported, which is a reflection on the long delays within the criminal justice process.
8. Both WMRSASC and AXIS reported declines in client confidence with the criminal justice process, which has fallen to below 50%. This also reflects the delays within the criminal justice process with some victims waiting over three years for cases to come to trial. The PCC has repeatedly highlighted these and other related issues within the criminal justice system and continues to work with partners, with a view to seeking improvements for victims and the wider community.
9. In 2022/23, the Branch Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) service worked with 305 children and young people, providing direct 1:1 support for those at risk of, or experiencing child sexual exploitation.

Victim Services

10. In March, the PCC negotiated a 1 year contract extension with **Victim Support** to run to 31 March 2024. **Victim Support** provide services to support any victim of crime, and for 2022/23 received a total of 1,710 referrals. 89% of victims leaving the service report feeling more able to cope following support, but victims continue to demonstrate dissatisfaction for the criminal justice system.
11. Victim Support are also commissioned to provide a restorative justice service. For 22/23, 63 people were supported for **Restorative Justice** processes. Restorative Justice outcomes shows a more holistic picture for victims, with most not just achieving a 'better informed' picture but also a more balanced rounded improvement across all outcome areas, such as their experience of '*reintegrating*' after a crime, or their overall '*experience of the CJS.*'
12. **The Victim Advice Line (VAL)** handled a total of 15,564 referrals during the year where needs were identified. Of those referred in Q4, 826 victims had their initial needs met by the VAL service, with 1,627 victims having their needs met by VAL triage and other support services. At year end, 5,894 victims felt they had achieved 1 or more positive outcome(s) with the main improvement being around feeling better informed and empowered to act.
13. The PCC commissioned Victim and Offender Needs Assessment is anticipated for completion by June and will inform the recommissioning activity for Victims Services (multi-crime support) which will begin in Autumn.
14. **The Victim Support "I am ME!" Hate Crime Project** hosted 6 awareness and training sessions with 76 participants, and 8 outreach events, reaching 436 people. The project held 3 meetings with partners, one of which brought the West Mercia Police hate crime officers together to improve and promote more joined up working, data sharing and responses to hate crime.

Prevention

15. DIVERT, the PCC commissioned pre-arrest drug referral service received a total of 741 referrals in Q4, an increase of 14.2% on Q3, of which 237 engaged in the group

programme. This rise in both referrals and engagement uptake, is likely because of learning and refresher work conducted at the beginning of the year with officers, by the provider.

16. The PCC commissioned CLIMB service received 355 referrals for 10-17 year olds at risk of criminal exploitation. They sustained support for over 631 CYP's during 2022/23 and 158 left with positive primary outcomes.
17. The PCC has approved a £200,000 annual budget to pilot expansion of CLIMB which allows any person up to the age of 17 access to support, including a parent/carer/family worker in a whole family approach initiative.

Building a more secure West Mercia

Improving Responses To Domestic Abuse

18. In February, the PCC was successful in a bid to the Home Office for £1.2 million up to 2025 for the provision of a low-medium risk domestic abuse perpetrator programme. Alongside the budget investment made by the PCC for 23/24 for DRIVE, the Home Office funding means that West Mercia will have all risk DA perpetrator programmes across West Mercia in 2023. The new service will be mobilised in the summer.
19. **Worcestershire and Herefordshire's DRIVE** programme has seen a total of 49 high risk perpetrators allocated in Q4, with 49 associated victims/survivors and 112 associated children and young people. Of note, those with closed cases report an 86% reduction in high-risk physical abuse, and 100% reduction in high-risk sexual abuse, harassment and stalking and jealous, controlling and coercive behaviours.
20. The **Men and Masculinities** domestic abuse perpetrator programme ran 4 groups in Q4 across Herefordshire and Worcestershire which included an online group. The online group was set up to meet the needs of those living in rural areas and are unable to drive or obtain public transport. Over the quarter, 35 referrals were received, taking the annual total to 182. Highlights from Q4, include 7 men completing the programme, with 2 men being allowed back into the family home. Another man was also allowed more contact time with his children because of the work completed around his behaviour, and another allowed unsupervised contact with his child following supervised contact being in place for a year.

Female Offenders – reducing reoffending

21. The PCC partnered with Willowdene; a provider of therapeutic, trauma informed holistic support in a successful bid to the Ministry of Justice Female Offenders Fund. £247,115 of funding over three years will facilitate an out of court disposal pilot targeting women specifically. The West Mercia bid was one of only four schemes funded out of twenty-seven who applied.

Road Safety

22. The PCC has been collaborating with partners on a specification for a road safety needs assessment. This will provide an updated data and gap analysis and includes a consultation which will inform future commissioning. Its anticipated completion date is Autumn 2023.
23. The PCC's budget for 2022/23 demonstrated an ongoing commitment to directly tackle speeding in communities. The investment from last year has seen recruitment of 8.5

full-time equivalent new members of the Road Safety team. A further three additional posts will be filled shortly.

Regional Collaboration

24. The Regional Policy team held a counter terrorism 'deep dive' session in collaboration with West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU). The session looked at the regional threat and risk picture, the management of terrorist offenders as well as the impact of the recently published Independent Review of Prevent and Manchester Arena Inquiry. The 'deep dive' helped give assurance that the CTU systems work effectively for the communities of West Mercia.
25. Quarterly regional roads policing and roads safety meetings continue to provide an opportunity to develop a strategic understanding of the regional roads landscape. These meetings, chaired by West Mercia Superintendent Steph Brighton, also allow the regional policy team to identify possible areas of future regional collaboration.
26. The PCC attended a Regional Governance Group meeting where he was able to seek further reassurance as to the efficiency and effectiveness of the West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit. He also received a further quarterly briefing on the work of police and partners to tackle serious and organised crime across West Mercia and the region.
27. In partnership with the regional PCCs, a commissioning exercise has been conducted to commission a regional Pre-Arrest Diversionary Service from 1 July 2023. The regional service proposal has arisen from the publication of the government's drug strategy 'from Harm to Hope'. It is anticipated that 670 service users will be referred into the service from West Mercia.

Criminal justice

28. Following part 2 of the Home Office's PCC Review, national guidance has been published strengthening the role of the PCC as the Chair of Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJB). The guidance also sets out expected membership and their roles within the board. The guidance will be implemented in West Mercia.
29. The review of the West Mercia LCJB has also determined new priorities for the Board, with a supporting delivery plan and the development of performance metrics for the next 12 months. Some of the new priorities include improving timeliness & quality, increasing victim engagement and the experience of vulnerable victims.
30. Court backlogs continue to be an issue impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Bar strikes. The backlog continues to create unacceptable delays for victims, witnesses and defendants in West Mercia and ensuring timely access to justice will continue to be a key focus for the LCJB. The ongoing delays also have a knock-on effect for support services. West Mercia's Witness Care Unit is supporting over 21,000 victims and witnesses every month, placing additional demands against police resources, which the PCC has committed additional resource to fund. The PCC set up a task and finish group following the LCJB on 25 May, convening partners to develop an action plan centred around court backlogs.
31. Overall performance in the CJS in West Mercia remains stable since the last panel report:

- The conviction rate for the Magistrates Court sits at 86% in West Mercia compared to the National average of 84%.
- West Mercia's Domestic Violence conviction rate stands at 78% compared to the National average of 76%.
- Witness Attendance rates remain the highest in the region at 87%. The PCC allocated additional funds into the Witness Care Unit for 2 additional witness care officers which has immediately resulted in an uplift in witness attendance.

Serious Violence

32. The Serious Violence Duty commenced on 31 January 2023. Whilst the PCC is not subject to the Duty, he is playing a key role in supporting delivery of the Duty through convening, monitoring and grant making functions. The PCC was successful in February for a bid of £789,003 up to 2025 to the Home Office to support partners in exercising their requirements under the Duty.
33. Each local authority area has confirmed the local partnership under which the Duty will be delivered. In all areas, the duty will be delivered through existing Community Safety Partnership governance arrangements. The PCC has written to all responsible authorities in May to outline his governance and oversight arrangements which will be through the Crime Reduction Board.
34. The PCC has continued to engage with specified authorities through Community Safety Partnerships to ensure preparedness for implementation of the duty. This includes taking a convening and leadership role to facilitate engagement between the specified authorities and Crest who have been commissioned by the Home Office to provide the national support offer. Over the last quarter, the PCC's Office has supported Crest to assess readiness of the local partnerships in West Mercia.
35. The PCC has ringfenced £370,000 of funding to commission a West Mercia wide pilot serious violence diversionary service to divert those at risk of, or involved in, knife carrying / knife related activity. Final procurement stages are underway with the service anticipated to mobilise in Summer 2023.
36. The PCC commissioned serious violence needs assessment is currently underway, with consultation and engagement activity intensifying over Q4 particularly with children and young people. The new duty stipulates we must adopt creative approaches to engage the younger hard to reach cohorts, so the team have been utilising a variety of engagement methods and incentives.

Reforming West Mercia

37. The budget for 2022/23 was set at £260.5m. Following additional funding and use of reserves the total budget for the year is £261.557m. The outturn position is £253.926m. Therefore there is a reported underspend of £7.632m which represents 2.9% of the total budget. The main area of underspend has been on employees. The challenging labour market has made recruitment challenging alongside the focus on ensuring that West Mercia met the uplift target for officers.
38. The target for uplift of officers for West Mercia in 2022/23 was 125. Not only was this target achieved, but West Mercia were also able to deliver an additional 19 officers taking the total to 2,475. This means that today, West Mercia has the highest number of officers on record supporting all four core strands of the PCC's strategic objectives within the Safer West Mercia Plan. This uplift needs to be maintained in 2023/24 and

the PCC will continue to monitor and support the force's delivery of the National Uplift Programme through regular governance mechanisms.

39. The PCC has made a commitment for a further 40 additional officers in 2023/24 specifically focused on community priorities. Efforts have also been made to improve diversity and representation within West Mercia. Progress has been made in respect of increased recruitment of female officers and those from ethnic minorities, however it is recognised further progress is still required.
40. The next largest area of budget investment has been in the digital transformation agenda. During 2022/23 the Digital Transformation Programme has delivered a significant upgrade in the support infrastructure for running IT applications, including a significant improvement in resilience through investment in using a Crown Digital Database Hub. This work has enabled the rollout of M365 to start. In due course this will enable the Force to make use of the wider tools and apps available to deliver more effective and efficient services. 2023/24 is the final year of this current programme and will see even more focus on benefit realisation.
41. Part of the reform agenda has been working with partners to have a more effective, and long term, approach to crime. The Safer Communities project, in partnership with Telford and Wrekin Council, is an example of this, in which the PCC has invested £500,000 and delivered a wide range of community outcomes. The PCC has made a commitment in 2023/24 for more funding to be made available to roll out this style of collaborative partnership working across West Mercia. Local authorities across West Mercia are engaged with the PCC now, with a view to developing local programmes in the coming weeks to benefit local communities.

Estates Update

42. West Mercia Police need to be in fit-for-purpose buildings that support the new technology which is being introduced. It is also important that, whilst doing this, savings, and ways of working better and more closely with partners are identified. The work of the PCC around estates has focused on delivering against those needs. The insourced Estates model enables West Mercia Police and Herefordshire & Worcestershire Fire & Rescue Service to realise their mid and long-term visions as well as deliver their estates and financial strategies. The new service is already proving to be both a better value for money and enhanced property management service model.
43. Work on major capital projects continues at a good pace, in respect of:
 - A new Police & Fire combined hub at the Middlehouse Lane site in Redditch. Site remediation works are ongoing, with the programme to deliver the new facility on track for completion October 2024.
 - A new Firearms Range & Training School at Hindlip HQ. To date, architects have been appointed and activities are underway to appoint and commission a principal designer, planning consultants and various site-specific surveys. The current work programme indicates the Firearms Range is due for completion in June 2025 with the new training school due for completion in April 2026.
44. In the financial year 2022/23 the Estates Team commissioned a full condition survey of the Estate to determine the current condition and compliance of the sites and buildings. This data has been utilised to determine the 2023/24 programme and will be further developed to prepare a 5-year, long term planned programme. Ongoing delivery of the annual planned programme of minor works and refurbishments continues to provide significant improvements to the Estate.

45. The annual planned programmes for 2023/24 are made up of 3 defined budgets, to the total value of £2m, to enable improvement and significant repair or remedial works across the OPCC Estate. These budgets are broken as follows:

- Investment In Estates Infrastructure (Capital) - **£800,000**
 - This will deliver significant capital improvement works to protect or increase the value of the assets. Works have been scheduled based on the condition of the property or statutory compliance requirements.
- Investment In Estates Infrastructure (Revenue) - **£550,000** -
 - This will deliver repair or remedial works outside of routine or planned maintenance to maintain the value of the estate and prevent further deterioration.
- Local Policing Estates Transformation (Capital) - **£700,000**
 - This will deliver significant refurbishment or improvement works to existing facilities to maintain standards, improve working environments, or changes to meet operational requirements.

46. Some examples of completed works and those planned, include but are not limited to the following:

- Provision of a new Learning & Training Hub at Bridgnorth police station;
- Provision of a new learning hub at Hindlip HQ;
- Significant improvements and refurbishment to Hindlip HQ to improve offices, working environments and specialist areas e.g. dog section and forensics;
- Major refurbishment of the Hereford multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) facility;
- Various reglazing and new roofing works across the estate;
- Various refurbishments works to offices, staff welfare areas across the estate;
- Various replacement of heating and cooling infrastructure across the estate;
- Remedial and improvement works to custody areas.

47. Significant work is underway across the West Mercia Estate as part of measures to drive energy efficiency. This work is intended to both reduce West Mercia's carbon footprint and offset increased pressures that the Force faces around energy costs. Research shows that 75% of electricity usage in offices is controlled by individuals. A '*Turn it Off*' energy saving campaign has begun, whereby staff are encouraged to take that extra second to turn a light off, unplug a phone charger or shut down laptops at the end of the day. Activities such as this will make a big difference in helping West Mercia Police to reduce its energy consumption.

48. Current projects include:

- Installation of LED lighting at Kidderminster Police Station, planned for completion in July 2023. This will be followed by the other 4 x DHQ sites and Hindlip Main Hall, which will significantly reduce electricity consumption and costs at these sites over the next 1-4 years.
- Installation of additional EV charging Infrastructure at Worcester Police Station, to support West Police electric vehicle fleet.

49. The PCC is actively engaged in the current public consultation around the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) Review, specifically around the status of police headquarters at Hindlip. The review proposes to remove major developed site status for Hindlip Park. If confirmed, this would threaten the long-term viability of the

site as an operational headquarters for both the police force and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

50. The Estates Team continue to develop and refine their service, with improvements to and the streamlining of the supply chain, thereby achieving best value on various term contracts to include but not limited to grounds maintenance, waste, fire safety systems, etc.

Financial management

51. The achievement of delivering services within budget for 2022/23 is welcomed, particularly with the savings target of £6.040m that had to be achieved, combined with the increasing challenge of inflation increasing the cost base.
52. The underspend of £7.632m represents 2.9% of the budget. The PCC has set a clear intention for resources to be used on delivering service improvement. Whilst recognising that this is an improvement on the 2021/22 outturn, the PCC will continue to challenge the organisation to deliver by using all resources that are made available. £400,000 of the underspend from 2022/23 will be used to deliver additional policing capacity in 2023/24, clearly aligned to the Safer West Mercia Plan, to address priority needs in local communities.
53. The budget for 2023/24 was signed off on the 27 March, which set a Net Revenue budget of £273.038m. Following the Police and Crime Panel meeting in February, the PCC met regularly with the Force to agree a detailed plan to be able to set a balanced budget. The PCC has set out clear expectations for the Chief Constable to deliver service improvement and return on investment for the public. The Force continue to seek efficiencies and savings to ensure that costs are controlled within the resource envelope available.
54. The Force presented a variety of options as to how to achieve the balanced budget. The PCC made the decision to increase the use of reserves to fund the 2023/24 budget, to bridge the unavoidable gap and avoid having to make quick resourcing decisions. The additional use of available reserves enables the force to plan reduction in costs in a more planned and controlled way, to ensure that the impact on service delivery is understood. The Force has a Budget Implementation Team in place, which will provide a strong link between management, budget holders and finance to ensure that good financial management is at the core of service delivery.
55. Recognising the financial challenges in place, the planning for 2024/25 budget has already started. A detailed programme is being drawn up to provide the framework to deliver future balanced budgets, which is based on the funding available whilst delivering the service improvements committed to in the Safer West Mercia Plan.

Reassuring West Mercia

56. The PCC, Deputy PCC and Assistant PCCs continue to carry out engagements with communities, such as attending parish council meetings, visiting local community groups, and those that receive funding from the PCC. A total of 47 engagements have taken place between February and April.
57. The PCC continues to monitor his engagement and reach with communities, across social media. Between February and April 778 posts were uploaded, more than 5,607 people engaged with posts, and 153 new followers were gained. There are now 12,450 people signed up for PCC news updates via the Neighbourhood Matters system and

1,891 receiving the PCC's monthly newsletter. The PCC sends monthly newsletters to MPs to ensure they are sighted on activity in their constituencies.

58. During the period February and April, 31 press releases and statements have been issued. This resulted in 92 items of media coverage, helping to ensure that the PCC maintains a visible presence across West Mercia's communities, playing his part in community leadership and providing reassurance where necessary.
59. During the period February and April, the PCC's office dealt with 490 new pieces of casework. The most common themes were around road safety and antisocial behaviour (ASB) with other key trends around Police contact and local policing. As a result of this, the PCC, Deputy PCC or Assistant PCC have visited areas of concern to understand the issues and identify solutions, if necessary.
60. Between February and April, circa 4,958 people visited the PCC's website. Work has been completed to improve the accessibility of the website, allowing people with a range of additional needs to have better access to information. Work will continue to ensure that the required levels are met and maintained.
61. The PCC has just started a new engagement programme, Community Conversation, which aims to ensure community voices are heard and reflected in the decisions the PCC makes on behalf of them. The locations have largely been chosen based on concerns raised by the public via correspondence. The Community Conversation will continue through the summer, alongside other events.

Performance and accountability

Holding to account

62. Since the last Panel report, three holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable have taken place. A public meeting focused on confidence in policing was held in January 2023. The thematic meetings in February and March 2023 focused on Criminal Justice and the Independent Inquiry into Telford Child Sexual Exploitation (IITCSE) respectively. Notes from the meetings are published on the PCC's website and recordings of public meetings are available online.
63. Key findings/outcomes from the thematic meeting on Criminal Justice include:
 - West Mercia Police is subject to national challenges in respect of Criminal Justice including the impact of COVID on court backlogs, and legislative changes that place demands on policing including disclosure requirements.
 - Conviction rates in West Mercia are consistently strong. The force area has a high magistrate's court conviction rate which is over 4% above the regional average at 87.2% and national average of 82.4%. Guilty pleas at first hearing are above the regional average at 76.7% and national average of 74.2%.
 - Similarly, the Crown Court conviction rates are above national average of 79.2% with performance in 2022 consistently above 80%. The guilty plea rate of 76.7% is well above the 72.4% achieved nationally. West Mercia has also consistently outperformed national averages for domestic abuse conviction rates.

- West Mercia's file quality is currently below the national average. The force has recently piloted a triage team to review files prior to submission to the CPS which has improved performance.
- The PCC shared oversight and learning from the out of court disposal (OOCs) Scrutiny Panel and how learning from this panel could be better shared, particularly in the context to impending changes around OOCs.
- The Force committed to providing the PCC with regular CJS updates, to include exception reports. Exception reports will be linked to the bi-monthly.

64. The IITCSE report included a recommendation for the PCC to have a specific holding to account meeting on the IITCSE. The details of the IITCSE recommendation were used to inform the Terms of Reference for the meeting, ensuring the PCC satisfied all requirements of the recommendation. Key findings/outcomes from the IITCSE meeting are set out below:

- The progress report provided an update against the 13 recommendations related to West Mercia Police (either solely or in partnership with the Local Authority). Assurance was provided that a range of activity is either under way or scheduled to satisfy the recommendations of the Inquiry. This includes practice reviews, training, enforcement, audit, and scrutiny.
- The force have worked with Telford Council to set up a joint CSE review group which will meet once every 6 months and has a central role in producing the annual partnership report.
- Quarterly meetings have also been established between the Chief Officer lead for IITCSE, and the PCC's Head of Policy and Commissioning to ensure the PCC can support the force to tackle CSE through the use of grants and funding.
- The force provided a high level 'Road Map' for 2023, identifying key strands of activity including:
 - Q1: launch of the Telford & Wrekin threshold guidance; analysis of the partnership CSE data to inform the expected annual report.
 - Q2: publication of the first annual CSE report; piloting procedural justice (PJ) training.
 - Q3: forecast roll out of procedural justice training; completion of wider CSE training/CPD review; external campaign to heighten CSE awareness; scheduled review activity against recommendation progresses a year after IITCSE publication.
 - Q4: finalisation of training programme with the Children's Society; Force Crime Registrar (FCR) CSE marker audit; review of any National Referral Mechanism (NRM) changes; final assessment with partners of progress made.

65. The PCC is committed to continuously improving internal processes, and in January 2023 the PCC commissioned a wholesale review of his holding to account function. As a result of the review, a number of recommendations were identified to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the holding to account process with a focus on tangible outcomes and service improvement for communities. The recommendations would also facilitate more robust scrutiny of key performance issues on a quarterly basis, including

performance in relation to local and national policing priorities (inc. the budget metrics) and HMICFRS recommendations.

66. The PCC's Policy Team has been working with the Chief Officer team to implement the recommendations from the review in the new financial year. Going forward, the meetings will be called "Assurance and Accountability" meetings. The first meeting under the new process was 5 June and focused on Performance.
67. The second meeting was 29 June and was a thematic deep dive on putting victims and their voice at the heart of the Criminal Justice System. This session focused on implementation of the new Most Appropriate Agency (MAA) policy (inc. the impact on the public and stakeholder engagement), and Victim Advice Line (VAL).
68. To supplement the formal meetings, the PCC also runs a process whereby he can request 'ad hoc assurance briefings' from the Chief Constable, enabling the PCC to respond dynamically to emerging, or single item issues. This process is run via email and requires the Chief Constable to provide a written response to the concerns the PCC has raised.
69. In January 2023, the PCC requested an ad hoc briefing on police vetting and corruption. The Chief Constable was asked to provide an update on activity undertaken to implement the recommendations in the national HMICFRS inspection on vetting, misconduct and misogyny published in November 2022; and requirements from the Home Office to recheck vetting of all officers and staff.
70. Key findings/outcomes from the Chief Constable's response to the ad hoc briefing request are set out below:
 - a. Following publication of the 2 HMICFRS vetting and counter corruption reports, the force has developed an action tracker to record and monitor activity to address the reports' findings. For over a third of national recommendations, West Mercia Police had either successfully delivered or had made significant progress in delivering the required activity.
 - b. The Chief Constable is confident that every single officer and member of staff working for the force holds vetting, with processes in place to review vetting at appropriate intervals dependant on the level of vetting held.
 - c. A standard operation procedure (SOP) is in place to ensure a review of vetting takes place following any final written warning, written warning, or reduction in rank.
 - d. The force is complying with the Home Office directive to check all officer and staff details against the Police National Database. Any criminal conviction / adverse trace identified from this process will be reviewed and where appropriate, a full review of current vetting will be undertaken by the Vetting Unit and Force Vetting Manager.
 - e. The force has developed and implemented a new Internal Domestic Abuse (DA) and Vulnerability Policy and Procedure which clearly details support provided to officers and staff who are subject to DA or other vulnerability crime. Additional support is available through the Victim Advice Line (commissioned by the PCC) for internal and external victims of crime and police misconduct.

71. The PCC continues to use his accountability processes to focus on standards and ethics and in March 2023 commissioned an 'ad hoc briefing' from the Chief Constable in respect of the Casey Report. A response was submitted by the Chief Constable and discussed as part of the PCC- CC regular weekly meeting.

West Mercia Perception Survey

72. Headline findings from the latest results of the West Mercia commissioned perception survey, Q3 2022/23, are set out below:

- a. The majority of residents (83%) agreed that they had confidence in West Mercia Police with a similar proportion confident that they would receive a good service from the force (81%), this is comparable to findings in the previous period.
- b. Around 73% of residents agreed that West Mercia Police understood the issues that affect their community, this is an improvement on the previous quarter (70%).
- c. 89% said they were confident they could access the police in an emergency and 70% in a non-emergency – an improvement compared to the previous quarter.
- d. 20% said they see an officer or PCSO at least once per week, this is comparable to findings in the previous period. Over half of residents are satisfied with the levels of policing in their area; this is stable.

Force Performance Reports

73. The PCC scrutinises a weekly dashboard of performance along with monthly and quarterly summary reports. A copy of the Q4 performance report can be found here - [Police Quarterly Performance Reports - West Mercia Police Crime Commissioner \(westmercia-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://westmercia-pcc.gov.uk).

74. Below are some key performance areas of note:

- a. Recording around outcomes: West Mercia has seen slight improvements in action taken against offenders. There has also been a downward trend in cases where the victim does not support the prosecution, however in 2022/23 West Mercia still recorded the highest proportion of cases finalised this way amongst most similar forces.
- b. Response times: performance has remained stable for Grade 1 incidents although is below the force's target. The force is reviewing their targets following some changes to how they grade incidents.
- c. Victim satisfaction: this continues to be an area of concern, which is specifically linked to victims being kept informed. Although some areas have seen improvements, such as domestic abuse, across the policing area, overall satisfaction is still below aspirational targets. As a local and national policing priority, satisfaction will be subject to scrutiny at the June Performance Assurance and Accountability meeting.
- d. Call handling: Both 999 and 101 have seen a slight reduction in performance during Q4, however improvements are seen when compared to the summer period last year. 999 performance is continually above the target of 90% of calls

answered within 10 seconds. The measures used to assess call handling performance have been subject to review during 2022/23.

- e. Roads: Positively, the number of people being killed or seriously injured on West Mercia's roads (KSIs) has been declining since November 2022.

HMICFRS Inspection Reports

75. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have published 2 inspection reports since the last Panel meeting in February:

- An inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence (national report published March);
- An inspection of how well the police and National Crime Agency tackle the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children (national report published April).

76. As required by law, the PCC has written to the Home Secretary in response to the national report on serious youth violence. This response has been published on the PCC's website and sets out how the Chief Constable in West Mercia will address the 2 recommendations for all force's nationally. Reducing serious violence is a key commitment within the Safer West Mercia Plan, and the letter also sets out the work being undertaken by the PCC in response to the new Serious Violence Duty.

77. The response to the digital forensics report is due to be drafted at the end of May.

78. Following the review of the Holding to Account process in January, oversight and governance of force activity against HMICFRS report recommendations (local and national) has been integrated into the "Assurance and Accountability" programme for 2023/24. From June an update on progress against key HMICFRS reports will be provided by the Chief Constable at the PCC's Quarterly Performance Assurance and Accountability meetings (first meeting June).

79. The formal PCC-led meetings will be supplemented by regular meetings between the PCC's Policy team, the force's HMICFRS liaison officer, and the regional lead within HMICFRS.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Financial Implications

None.

Legal Implications

None

Equality Implications

None.

Supporting Information

None

Contact Points for the Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website](#)



WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 JULY 2023

COMBATING DRUGS PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider the report.

Background

2. The UK Government's drug strategy, titled "From Harm to Hope: A 10-Year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives" was launched in December 2021 and will run until 2031.
3. The Strategy was based on three main pillars: break drug supply chains, deliver a world class treatment and recovery system, achieve a generational shift in the demand for recreational drugs.
4. In order to deliver the Strategy, Government formed local Combating Drugs Partnerships (CDPs). There are two CDPs in West Mercia, one covering Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, and one covering Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Each CDP is led by a senior responsible officer (SRO). The SRO for each of the two CDPs is the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The Commissioner has committed significant financial resource to the partnerships to ensure they are effective and can deliver the best possible outcomes for local communities.
5. CDPs involve a range of partners working together in a coordinated and integrated way to achieve a common goal. The CDP is supported by ongoing investment and evaluation, with regular reviews and updates to ensure that they remain effective and responsive to new and emerging challenges.
6. In terms of breaking drug supply chains, the Police are the lead agency. The Force has adopted a proactive approach to breaking drug supply chains. The approach involves intelligence-led policing, targeted enforcement, and collaboration with partner agencies and the community.
7. The Force uses a range of tactics to gather intelligence on drug-related activity, including surveillance, covert operations, and information sharing with partner agencies. This intelligence is then used to target drug dealers and traffickers and disrupt their supply chains.

8. In Q4 of 2022/23 the Force saw an 83% increase in the number of disruptions linked to organised crime. This is highest number of moderated disruptions recorded by the Force in West Mercia.
9. The Force also reported that it had closed over 53 county lines during 2022/23. In addition, the Force seized over £446k worth of drugs, £96k in cash, made over 330 arrests and seized over 130 weapons during 2022/23.
10. In terms of delivering a world class treatment and recovery system Government are investing an additional £780m over the next three years. Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin, Worcestershire and Herefordshire have all received increased funding as a result. The additional investment is being used to strengthen locally commissioned services, improve quality, capacity and outcomes.
11. In addition to improving local services, the CDPs are focused on improving referrals into treatment from the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The CDPs are working with partners to improve both front end referrals from the Police and court ordered referrals. The CDPs are also working with Prisons and Probation to improve the transition from the secure estate to community, ensuring that prisoners with substance misuse needs are referred into local services upon release.
12. In addition to improving support pathways, the CDPs are focused on improving early intervention, improving training and education within the workforce, reducing drug related deaths, improving quality outcomes and improving access to services for people with dual diagnosis. In addition, the CDPs are seeking to improve access to accommodation and employment.
13. Across West Mercia there are over 5,000 people currently in structured treatment, the majority being treated for opiates. Over 1,800 people are in treatment for alcohol. Unfortunately, there is unmet need for both drug and alcohol treatment services across West Mercia which the CDPs will seek to address over the coming years.
14. In terms of achieving a generational shift in the use of recreational drugs, the CDPs, working with stakeholders will embark upon a programme of prevention, early intervention, delivering school-based programmes, family-based intervention and appropriate enforcement when necessary.
15. In order to deliver the Government's objectives, the CDPs have worked with partners to develop a strategic delivery plan and performance framework. To ensure delivery each of the local substance misuse groups have aligned local activity to the overarching plan.
16. The PCC has chaired a series of CDP meetings to track the progress of this work, the most recent in March. In addition, he has taken part in national meetings, in February and May as part of his role.
17. The CDPs are currently working with partners to conduct a series of deep dives on each of pillars. The deep dives will help the CDPs better understand what's working well and where additional effort is required. The findings were presented in June 2023.

Risk Management Implications

None.

Financial Implications

None.

Legal Implications

None.

Equality Implications

None.

Contact Points for the Report

For the Police and Crime Panel: Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager, Worcestershire County Council

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 27 JULY 2023

MOST APPROPRIATE AGENCY (MAA)

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider the report.

Background

2. On the 3 April 2023, West Mercia Police introduced a new policy and procedure referred to as 'Most Appropriate Agency' (MAA). The Policy is based on Humberside Police's Right Care Right Person (RCRP) policy and procedure.
3. Humberside Police identified that before the introduction of RCRP an average of 1,566 incidents per month were being reported to the Police relating to issues such as concerns for welfare, mental health incidents or missing persons.
4. Humberside Police were concerned that by attending these incidents, they were not providing the most suitable intervention to vulnerable members of the public who required specialist support. This was putting both the public and their officers at more risk. It also meant that the public were not receiving the most effective response to incidents from public services.
5. Humberside Police made the conscious decision to refocus on core policing duties, as set out by Sir Robert Peel. These still form the basis of policing in the UK today. The core duties under common law are:
 - a) preventing and detecting crime
 - b) keeping the King's peace
 - c) protecting life and property
6. Following this decision, Humberside Police sought advice to understand where duty of care responsibilities lie and where other agencies would be more appropriate to attend calls for service. This advice was used as a basis to support the development of the RCRP initiative.
7. RCRP is a programme of work that has been carried out over a three-year period involving partners in ambulance, mental health, acute hospitals and social services. The premise of the initiative is that these partnerships ensure RCRP can achieve its aim to provide the best care to the public by ensuring the most appropriate response to calls for service.

8. RCRP and MAA is intended to ensure that everyone, including the most vulnerable members of our community, receive the correct service, by the most 'Appropriate Agency' – first time and every time.
9. The Policy is underpinned by case law and legislation that specifically defines the parameters of the Police role & purpose; and provides the legality, jurisdiction & legitimacy in which the Police should be operating.
10. Whilst the Policy is underpinned by relevant legal precedent and statutory guidance relating to Police powers, discretion will always exist for operational commanders. If, or where, West Mercia Police choose to attend an incident where there is no statutory policing role, consideration would need to be given as to whether some potential actions from attending officers would be within the lawful execution of their duty. It therefore follows that the decision to attend must be clearly recorded, with the rationale and a clear tactical plan as to what is expected of the attending officers. This is a consideration for the Force around implementation of the new policy.
11. Policing powers are not always appropriate to resolve many of the situations that officers are requested to attend by the public. In many cases, a legal precedent has already ruled that the Police service is not the most appropriate agency to act.
12. The majority of calls for service that will fall within the new Policy are those that relate to "Medical, Health & Social Care." The Police service rarely have the qualifications, training, or experience to respond to these calls as effectively as trained medical professionals, and rarely have the legal basis, jurisdiction or legitimacy to act.
 - a) The type of calls that this procedure is intended to address generally fall under the following headings.
 - b) Medical/Health related calls for service
 - c) Safe & Well or Welfare checks
 - d) AWOL mental health patients
 - e) Patients with full capacity who leave health facilities (A&E, GP etc) unexpectedly
 - f) Police support to voluntary mental health cases
 - g) Requested use of Police attendance for security at premises occupied by or attended by partner agencies
 - h) Requested use of Police for transportation of patients in the care of other agencies
 - i) Police use of emergency powers to mitigate incidents being managed by other agencies which have escalated
13. The Force policy sets out that all calls for service will be assessed and only those where there is an identified statutory policing role or where the call handler has confirmed that it is the most appropriate agency, will an incident be created. In all other situations the call will be closed as a contact record.

Assessment Model

14. West Mercia Police will continue to utilise the THRIVE assessment model for those calls for service where an incident has been generated; on the basis that the creation of an incident will denote that a Police response has been agreed.
15. The THRIVE assessment tool will allow for the appropriate decision making in relation to the grading and allocation of these calls for service; as below.

T: Threat

What is the overall threat posed by the report, not only to the victim, but to the immediate family, children, community and location?

H: Harm

What is the impact of the threat? Consider not just the victim or witnesses, but also the community impact.

R: Risk

What risks are obvious or yet to be determined?

What resources and specialist assets are needed to safeguard the victim or community?

I: Investigation

What is the legality, necessity, proportionality in relation to the offence being reported?

V: Vulnerability

What are individual or community vulnerabilities?

Identify how police and partners best safeguard against harm.

E: Engagement

What is the safest means of engagement for the victim and what is the most effective means?

16. During the THRIVE assessment, there is an assessment as to whether there is an immediate risk to life or serious harm to an identified person and determine who is the most appropriate agency to mitigate that risk.
17. Even where a response from the most appropriate agency would be delayed, the Force's position is that it is always preferable that a qualified person from the most appropriate statutory agency, in possession of all the relevant facts, should attend to the person in need. The only exception would be that where there is an immediate, unconditional and real threat to life.
18. This procedure allows West Mercia Police to be clear on its policing purpose and service delivery prior to deploying available resources.

Implementation of the Policy

19. In June 2022 Chief Officers were consulted on adopting RCRP, or MAA as a policy. The Policy was approved in principle and the Force began working on implementation, to include stakeholder engagement.

20. In August 2022, ACC Rachel Jones outlined the proposed policy to the West Mercia Vulnerability Partnership Executive Group (VPEG). VPEG brings together partners from across West Mercia involved in safeguarding and public protection. Members of VPEG were provided with a presentation outlining the policy and given an opportunity to ask questions. Several partners indicated that they would need to go back and consider the implications of the policy.
21. The Force began to formally consult with partners after the August VPEG meeting. West Mercia Police engaged with over 60 organisations holding a series of workshops and engagement events in addition to inviting stakeholders to take part in a formal consultation exercise.
22. As part of the consultation exercise the Force sought direct feedback from over 60 partners via a survey questionnaire. Executive leads and senior members of organisations were asked to cascade the survey and communication to their workforce. The Force anticipated in the region of 600 responses, (representing approximately 10 responses per agency) but received just 19 (approx. 2% of the expected returns). Most of the responses received indicated that the change in policy wouldn't have an impact on their organisation / service.
23. On the 9 November 2022, ACC Jones wrote to members of VPEG thanking members for their contribution and outlining that the Force would be moving towards implementing the policy. In addition, ACC Jones set out how the policy would be monitored, and management information would be brought back to VPEG for review.
24. While West Mercia Police were in the process of implementing MAA, the Home Office, College of Policing (CoP) and the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) were in the process of reviewing RCRP as a policy.
25. In February 2023, the Home Secretary (HS) wrote to each Police Chief and Police and Crime Commissioner outlining the work carried out by Humberside Police. In the letter the HS outlined how the CoP and the NPCC were working on developing a toolkit along with a range of products to assist Forces in implementing RCRP within their Force.
26. The toolkit is due to be released in July 2023 with the CoP recommending that Forces begin to implement the toolkit and Policy between July and December 2023. Part of the work being carried out by the CoP and NPCC includes a National Partnership Agreement between governing bodies, such as the Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS and Home Office.
27. In addition to the toolkit products being developed a national team and funded by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), will also be available to support forces to implement the toolkit between July and December 2023.
28. West Mercia has adopted the policy before the availability of the national toolkit and associated products. The impact of this and whether it would have presented any further opportunities to aid consultation, development and implementation is unknown.

Implications of the Policy

29. The MAA policy seeks to define a consistent relationship between the Force and all other public authorities, statutory partner agencies and those commissioned to provide services on their behalf. Similarly, it seeks to present greater transparency for members of our community who are often confused as to the roles they can expect from health and social care providers and from the Police service.
30. The Force is routinely contacted by partner agencies and members of our community to carry out a “welfare check” on a person whom they have concerns for, in the belief that Police are the most appropriate agency and are responsible or liable for the welfare of identified individuals deemed to be vulnerable or at risk.
31. Where WMP receive a call from any agency to conduct a welfare check AND the Force do not agree that there is a statutory policing role contained within the circumstances presented, the Force’s policy moving forward will be to “firmly decline the request.”
32. Any agency seeking the support of another, should not have a predetermined task for them or an assumption that they can transfer a duty of care; instead, these organisations should convene a “strategy meeting” so that all relevant partners can come together, facts can be shared and an informed decision made – with the details recorded as to whether a single agency or joint agency response is agreed upon. A strategy meeting can be convened at short notice and outside of normal office hours.
33. Consequently, partner agencies should therefore only have a need to call the OCC where there is an unforeseen, immediate, unconditional, and real threat to life; or where they are reporting an ongoing or imminent breach of the peace; or when reporting that a criminal offence has occurred, and they are requesting us to investigate it.
34. By adopting this approach, the Force believes that the most vulnerable members of our community can be assured of a consistent approach and that decisions relating to their care are based on the most up to date facts by qualified and experienced staff and they are attended to by the most appropriate agency.
35. Where a Police response is agreed within a strategy meeting, it should be clearly defined as to the parameters that exist for the deployment, as it should for the role of all other attending agencies.
36. Where public authorities, statutory partner agencies and those commissioned to provide services on their behalf conclude that there is a legitimate reason to request the support from the police service, West Mercia Police have introduced a specific Partnership Portal within Single Online Home (the website service used by most Police forces in England & Wales), allowing submissions of request to the Police electronically, 24hrs a day. The same process of Triage, THRIVE assessment and decision will be undertaken upon receipt of requests using this portal. This will not be seen as an alternative for convening a formal

strategy meeting and the requesting partnership will be engaged where this is the appropriate means of considering the case.

Legal and ethical considerations

37. The Police do not generally owe a duty of care under common law to protect individuals from harm – either harm caused by themselves or others. Where the Police omit to act, it is unlikely that they will be held to have breached a duty of care. The Police may owe a duty of care to protect persons from harm where the Police have assumed responsibility to care for them, or where the Police have created (directly or indirectly) the risk of harm.
38. Police can owe duties under the Human Rights Act 1988 to protect individuals from harm caused by others or harm caused by the person themselves. The Police owe responsibility to take all reasonable measures to assist where there is either:
 - a. a real and immediate risk to the life of a person (European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Article 2)
 - b. a real and immediate risk of that person being subject to serious harm or other inhumane treatment (ECHR Article 3)
39. The risks of harm where a duty will arise on the Police will generally, but not always, be from the criminal acts of a third party.
40. The general view is that any threat would have to comprise all the following before a duty to act would arise.
 - a) For a duty to arise under Article 2 the threat must be of death. A threat of injury, even serious, is not enough to create a risk of death.
 - b) Threats or risks that do not qualify under Article 2 may still qualify under Article 3. A duty may arise under Article 3 where there is a threat of serious injury, inhumane or degrading treatment. For example, a serious sexual assault would qualify as conduct breaching Article 3.
 - c) For both Articles 2 and 3 the threat or risk must be real and immediate. That means the threat must be present and continuing. Threats are not defined as real and immediate if they are conditional on other events happening or are said to occur at some point in the non-immediate future.
 - d) The threat has to be against a specific and identifiable person or group of persons. Generalised threats do not give rise to a duty.
41. In addition, central to the new policy is the assurance that all procedures and practice:
 - a) give clear guidance to officers and staff who use them
 - b) are reasonably comprehensive
 - c) are consistent with legal obligations
 - d) promote the best interests of the force and the public it serves
42. Extensive advice was given to Humberside Police on how RCRP fits with existing legal requirements on the Police – including the duty of care on Police in various circumstances and how this might vary with vulnerable callers (including children and young people).

43. Consideration was also given as to whether to conduct Police system checks on calls where Police did not have an obvious duty to respond. This considered existing force operating models, Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) investigations and law. The decision was made not to conduct intelligence checks where the decision was clearly a 'no', but to do so when the decision was 'yes' or 'maybe'.

Oversight and Governance

44. Humberside Police is clear that several factors supported the successful implementation of RCRP. These included the following:
- a) Governance structure – the development of tight governance, providing staff with clear guidance regarding parameters, information sharing and briefing expectations with statutory partners. Humberside Police also embedded legal advice in every step of RCRP initiative. This supported buy-in when staff were anxious about not meeting their duty of care.
 - b) Senior officer buy-in – having a chief officer lead who believed in RCRP and was prepared to drive it. Chief officer conversations are pivotal for gaining buy-in from other agencies and forming good partner relationships
 - c) Partnership working – RCRP benefits from close and effective partnerships with other agencies. Well-defined boundaries were created via MOUs, which also ensure all parties are updated about any intelligence that will be useful to them.
 - d) Systems – Humberside Police and partner agencies already benefit from the use of standardised risk and need rating tools that are now employed alongside RCRP.
45. Within West Mercia, governance is provided by a monthly scrutiny panel, chaired by the Head of Public Contact, which will report into the monthly Local Policing and Operations Board and Quarterly Performance Review meetings chaired by the ACC for Local Policing and Operations. Quarterly reporting will be provided to relevant partners, allowing insight and joint consideration of any necessary action needed to adjust policy or procedure.
46. In addition to existing governance arrangements, the PCC will monitor the implementation of MAA using his statutory audit and assurance framework to hold the Chief Constable to account.
47. The PCC reviewed the implementation of MAA at his accountability and assurance meeting with the Chief Constable on the 29 June 2023.

Risk Management Implications

48. The Police service currently performs functions which can exceed its statutory requirements. There are times when this is appropriate, but these instances should be consciously authorised and lawful.
49. The existing inappropriate demand is more likely to create greater vulnerability in some instances, as well as leave the organisation with blurred lines of accountability or legitimacy.

50. There is a reputational risk associated should other agencies seek to challenge the Police's decision to cease undertaking their tasks.
51. There is an indirect risk that other agencies will continue to be inaccessible and that vulnerable members of our community who are unable to access the most appropriate agency will continue to be advised to call the Police as an alternative or last resort.
52. A robust partnership approach with clear communication will mitigate many of these issues, as witnessed by the multiple forces who have adopted this strategy.

Financial Implications

53. None.

Legal Implications

54. See above.

Equality Implications

55. West Mercia Police are currently reviewing the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA should be completed by 1 June 23.
56. The Humberside RCRP policy treats children as vulnerable. This vulnerability should form part of the assessment of any real and immediate risk under Articles 2 and 3 of the ECHR.
57. The policy may also adopt a different threshold of 'significant harm' (such as that enshrined in the Children Act 2004 s31(9)) that is arguably lower than that in Articles 2 and 3.
58. When children are involved, there is also an obligation to consider the best interests of the child. (This could involve making referrals to other agencies such as social services, even when there is deemed to be no immediate risk and thus no duty of care on the Police.)

Supporting Information

None

Contact Points for the Report

For the Police and Crime Panel: Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager, Worcestershire County Council
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For the Police and Crime Commissioner: Gareth Boulton, Police and Crime
Commissioner, Chief Executive
gareth.boulton@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

27 JULY 2023

WORK PROGRAMME

Summary

1. From time to time the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel (PCP) will review its work programme and consider which issues should be investigated as a priority.

Background

2. Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 the Panel is responsible for scrutinising the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) exercise of their statutory functions. This includes:
 - (a) The power of veto, by a two-thirds majority of the total panel membership, over the level of the PCC's proposed precept;
 - (b) The power to review the Police and Crime Plan and make recommendations to the PCC who must have regard to them;
 - (c) The power to review the PCC's annual report and make recommendations at a public meeting, which the PCC must attend;
 - (d) The power to require the PCC to attend the Panel to answer questions.
3. Some of these functions are carried out at a specific time of year – for example the precept must be considered and a view given to the PCC by 8 February each year.
4. As a Scrutiny body the Panel reviews decisions made by the PCC, performance and issues of concern or interest. It is not possible to carry out all these functions in detail and the Panel needs to plan its workload and agree its priorities.
5. The enclosed work programme takes into account 'routine' items, items which are required to be considered by the Panel at particular points in the year and topics for which the Panel has asked the PCC to provide a report.

Dates of Future Meetings

6. Dates and details of future meetings are available on the County Council website.
[Browse meetings - West Mercia Police and Crime Panel - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/worcestershire/council/agenda/2023/07/27/west-mercia-police-and-crime-panel)

Purpose of the Meeting

7. The Panel is asked to consider the 2023 Work Programme and agree whether it would wish to make any amendments. The Panel will wish to retain the flexibility to take into account any urgent issues which may arise.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: West Mercia Police and Crime Panel Work Programme

Specific Contact Points for this Report

Samantha Morris, Interim Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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West Mercia Police and Crime Panel - Work Programme 2023/24

Meeting Date	Area of Scrutiny	Date of Last Report	Notes/Follow-up Action
27 July 2023	Draft Annual Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	15 June 2022 31 August 2021	
	Update on the Combatting Drugs Partnerships		Discussed at 23 November 2022
	Most Appropriate Agency work		Suggested by PCC's Office
	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report	3 February 2023	
	Quarterly budget monitoring (and key performance indicators)		Requested at 3 February 2023 meeting
	Work Programme	3 February 2023	
19 September 2023	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report	12 June 2023	
	Quarterly budget monitoring (and key performance indicators)		
	Update on the Implementation of the Estates Strategy	7 September 2022	
	Annual Report on Complaints	7 September 2022 15 September 2021	
	Work Programme	12 June 2023	
2 November 2023	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report	19 September 2023	

	Quarterly budget monitoring (and key performance indicators)		
	Update on the Crime Disorder Partnerships		Discussed at 23 November 2022
	Specification for the refresh of the road safety needs assessment		Discussed at 23 November 2022
	Work Programme	19 September 2023	
February 2024	PCC's Proposed Precept (and Medium Term Financial Plan) including budget briefing/Task Group arrangements		
	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report		
	Work Programme		
June/July 2024	Draft Annual Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia		
	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report		
	Quarterly budget monitoring (and key performance indicators)		Quarterly
	Work Programme		
Potential items			
TBC	Update on the progress of Combating Drug Partnerships (CDPs)	23 November 2022	Update twice yearly

TBC	ICT Improvement Programme		
TBC	Update on the Criminal Justice system		
TBC	Update on the Prevention Strategy	7 September 2022	
TBC	Update on the progress Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL 2021/22 – An inspection of West Mercia Police	15 June 2022	
TBC	Update on the progress of Joint HMICFRS & Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection Report: An unannounced inspection visit to police custody suites in West Mercia Police.	15 June 2022	
TBC	Update on the progress made against His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) - A report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police (published 17 November)		

Statutory items			
	PCC's Proposed Precept (and Medium Term Financial Plan) including budget briefing/Task Group arrangements	February/July/December	
	Draft Police and Crime Plan (or variation to it)		
	Annual Report of the PCC	Annually	
	Review the PCC's proposed appointment of a Chief Constable, Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and/or the Deputy PCC	As needed	
Regular items	Police & Crime Plan Activity and Performance Monitoring Report	Every meeting	
	Quarterly budget monitoring (including key performance indicators)	Every meeting	
	Work Programme	Every meeting	
	Annual Report on Complaints	Annually	