



DRAFT

END OF TERM REPORT

Draft Version	5
Author	Jl

Index

Foreword

Building a Safer West Mercia

Putting victims and survivors first

Building a more secure West Mercia

Reforming West Mercia

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

Community Engagement

Commissioning

Finance / Resources

Foreword / Introduction

I first published my end of term report at the beginning of 2020 when preparation work was well underway within my office to ensure our work would be compliant with pre-election period regulations and best practice. By March 2020 the rapidly evolving Covid-19 pandemic had led the Government to announce local government and police and crime commissioner elections were to be postponed for one year.

While the pandemic has undoubtedly impacted my work as Commissioner, my team and I have sought to minimise this impact as much as possible. This updated version of my report captures the significant amount of work and progress that has been achieved during my additional year in office. In response to an extra year in office I have also reviewed my Safer West Mercia Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose for my extended period in office.

The last year has been one of the most challenging years in recent history, and it has brought with it exceptional challenges for policing, with the force needing to change and adapt to meet the changing demands of the national health emergency. West Mercia Police officers and staff have risen to the challenge, and the community should be proud of their police service's contribution to tackling Covid19. As Commissioner I will continue to stand up for what our communities need to be kept safe and that includes, for the time being, the policing response to the pandemic.

Before my election in 2016 I set out the cornerstones of my plan to build a safer West Mercia. In my term as Commissioner I have remained true to this vision and worked hard to deliver on the commitments I made to our communities.

This has not been straight forward. At times it has required strong leadership and difficult decisions which were inevitably never going to be simple or universally popular. Without question, it would have been easier to just ignore some of the issues I have unearthed through my term in office, but I believe strongly that being PCC is about doing what is right for our communities, not whatever is most convenient for me.

I made a promise to act in the best interests of our communities. I have taken that commitment very seriously and it has always been my guiding principle as Commissioner. Where I have found problems I have worked hard to tackle them and not turn a blind eye, because the need to keep people safe, deliver the best possible policing services, ensure the best possible use of public money, and make sure victims are properly supported must always be the priorities. Maximising how effective and efficient we are in these principles, and ultimately delivering a safer West Mercia, was never going to happen overnight but I have started that journey. Significant progress has been made and that needs to be sustained going forward.

I have worked to build on the foundations we had in West Mercia. It has always been the case that the force has benefitted from the skills and professionalism of our hard working police officers, staff and volunteers. These people do vital work and I have sought to enable them to be even more effective in the services they provide to our communities, by supporting them

with the right resources, and unearthing and resolving problems both inside and outside the force.

I pledged to put victims first. To that end, I have delivered enhanced new services that improve victims' journeys and get them faster access to the help they need. I have increased provision of specialist support services for victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and child sexual exploitation. I also delivered on my pledge to produce a new Victims' Charter for West Mercia, within 100 days of taking office.

With demand on police forces remaining high nationwide, it has been even more vital to reform and modernise the force and make sure our hard working officers and staff have the right tools and resources to do their vital work. I have delivered on my promise through significant investments in technology such as body worn video and equipping frontline officers and Special Constables with laptops and smartphones. Improved efficiency in back-office support functions means that 47% of our police budget is now spent on officer pay & overtime, versus just 36% when I was elected. This is a good start but there is more to build on here and more that can be achieved with sustained focus and effort. I have taken significant steps to modernise police estates, reversing the previous policies of simply closing police stations, to ensure that police maintain visible community bases, but working in conjunction with partners to deliver better efficiency to the public.

These reforms and increased efficiency have made it possible to significantly increase our police officer numbers within the force. My decision to add 215 officers has been at the heart of my commitment to deliver a more secure West Mercia. Officer numbers have grown even further with the Government's commitment to add 20,000 officers nationwide. This uplift has resulted in an extra 93 officers this year, with a further 91 next, subject to my 2021/22 budget proposals. This will see an additional 399 officers compared to May 2016. Along with these additional officers I secured a commitment from the Chief Constable to improve police access, visibility and response times, along with increases for both public confidence and victim satisfaction. I look forward to these improvements being delivered, with the full officer uplift from my precept increases and the first tranche of government funded officers now in place. It is encouraging that we are already seeing reductions in crimes such as burglaries and anti-social behaviour. The joint decision by myself and the Chief Constable to end the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire is also central to delivering a more secure West Mercia. It will ensure that in the future, all of our policing plans and resources are focused where they should be – squarely on the communities of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire.

I pledged to reassure our communities, ensuring they not only are safe, but feel safe as well. I have worked to enhance relationships between our communities and their police force through greater accessibility, visibility and transparency. The results of an independent study show 87% of people have confidence in the force and 90% trust West Mercia Police. I have equally sought to reassure communities around my role as Commissioner, from how I have made key appointments in my office through to increasing transparency around how I hold the Chief Constable to account. I have been pleased to note that this has all led to a major increase in engagement with my office during my term from both the public and partners.

All of this has been achieved alongside a financial strategy that has seen significant increases to policing budgets, prudent use of reserves, and the lowest tax increases of any Commissioner in England in each year of my term.

There is more work to be done in ensuring the best possible services for our communities. While I have delivered hundreds more police officers for our communities, we need to ensure that extra resource is now delivering the best possible benefit and impact for our communities in reducing crime and tackling emerging threats. However, significant progress has been made, and is still being made, towards delivering more effective, efficient policing, along with stronger, more cohesive communities. Ultimately, this will deliver a safer West Mercia, and this will always be my guiding principle as Commissioner.

Building a Safer West Mercia (INFOGRAPHICS)

Putting victims and survivors first

- 80%+ of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Mercia Police
- 80% rape conviction rate^{##}
- 79% domestic abuse conviction rate^{##}
- 90% hate crime conviction rate
- 86% witness attendance rate^{##}

Building a more secure West Mercia

- 383,207 offences were recorded
- 91,698 recorded violence without injury offences
- 15,422 recorded rape and other sexual offences
- 214 people killed on West Mercia's roads⁺
- 6,437 hate crimes reported
- 66,000 homes protected against burglary via We Don't Buy Crime initiative

Recorded crime statistics 1st April 2016 – 31st October 2020

Reforming West Mercia

- 606,321 999 calls received (1/4/16 – 31/10/20)
- 87% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds[#]
- 84% of residents are confident they could access the police in an emergency^{*}
- 54%[#] of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds

*West Mercia Public Perception Survey Q2 20/21

**Crime Survey for England and Wales (June 2019)

[#]Apr – Oct 2020

^{##}Dec 202

⁺April 2016 – March 2020

⁺⁺March 2020

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

+ 399 police officers vs May 2016
2,359 community engagement events⁺⁺
13, 000 BWV clips a month
1,300 correspondence cases per year (vs 350 in 2016)
9,600 engagements with 'public H2A' meetings
87% public confidence^{*}
1200+ public articles/comments highlighting PCC work
361 Neighbourhood Watch groups⁺⁺
77,000 hours of volunteer service in West Mercia Police⁺⁺

Putting Victims and Survivors First

I pledged to ensure victims of crime had access to the best possible services to support them to cope and recover after being affected by crime. I have worked hard to deliver on that promise through increased investment in effective services, getting victims faster access to the help they need, and a greater focus on preventing people from becoming victims multiple times.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I have taken full advantage of the funding opportunities that have been made available to West Mercia from the Government. The additional £520,000 secured for victim services has enabled them to keep going and ensure some of the most vulnerable people have the support they need in order to cope and recover during the ongoing pandemic.

In response to the pandemic I have also provided a £50,000 dedicated fund to make sure the many local volunteer groups, set up to help during these times, had all the necessary resources to safely and effectively support those in need. I am proud to see this fund has been able to support the amazing community work out there. At a time when so many of us face uncertainty and additional worries, it has been great to see communities coming together day in day out to keep everyone connected and support those most at risk. We shouldn't lose sight of the amazing connections and support networks that have been formed during this period.

I pledged to deliver a new Victims' Charter within my first 100 days in office. I fulfilled this promise and have worked to ensure the contents of that Charter have been adhered to throughout my term of office. The Charter clarifies for all parties the levels of service and access to help that is required in West Mercia, giving clear commitments to victims and setting clear expectations to service providers. To further strengthen my approach I will soon be publishing my own victims' strategy which will outline how I will play my part and work with others to ensure to victims and survivors get the right help to cope and recover. My Victims Board has then provided a regular mechanism of monitoring delivery and outcomes, identifying and making continuous improvements, and where necessary holding partners and service providers to account.

April 2019 saw the launch of a new support service for victims of crime in West Mercia. Previous arrangements had delivered a good service, but by engaging with victims through the early stages of my term opportunities for significant improvements were identified. Feedback from victims consistently showed that they felt they had to tell their story too many times before getting to the person or organisation that they really needed.

The Victim Advice Line (VAL) is designed to get victims faster access to the right help, by ensuring they only have to tell their story once and receive the level and type of support they need tailored to their individual needs. It provides a single point of entry into support services and a clear pathway for victims, who were also clear that they wanted to regain a sense of choice and control over their lives. These principles have shaped all that the VAL has now started delivering, including victims of crime having increased confidence to seek support, whether or not the crime has been reported to the police. Between April and December 2020 the VAL have contacted 39,289 victims to offer support, and have provided that support to 4,844 of those who requested it. As part of my ongoing commitment to support victims, within

my budget proposals for 2021/22 I have outlined the need to improve the effectiveness of the approach to domestic abuse. This not only includes ensuring officers are referring victims and those affected to appropriate support, but also making sure that frontline officers receive training in domestic abuse.

The service is made up of a team of expert and fully trained Victim Care Coordinators who help victims when they come through to the service, be it through police, third party or self-referral. Victims may then be referred onto other specialist services, dependent on the level of support they need. Since its launch the VAL has grown in size and now has additional specialist staff, dedicated to supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse when they need it most. This expansion has in part been achieved with the assistance of additional funding from NHS England and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) COVID funding. The £50,000 I secured last year has funded a specialist sexual abuse and violence co-ordinator, whose role is to work with victims of sexual abuse and violence to navigate the complex pathways into support, ensuring the access is seamless. The role is also to work with the force and partners to increase knowledge and awareness of support options available to these victims, ensuring that victims are supported throughout the entire criminal justice system from the very beginning of their journey through to the end.

I have also continued to commission services from Victim Support around an effective restorative justice service for West Mercia. Victim Support were one of the commissioned organisations who received additional MoJ funding to provide specialist domestic abuse workers, one of whom is co-located within the Victim Advice Line. This pilot project worked very successfully and improved the quality of service provision provided to victims. This supports my commitment to achieving the right outcome for victims by enabling and supporting them to have their say and move on with their life. In the right circumstances, Restorative Justice has been shown to be an effective outcome for both victims and perpetrators and I have been pleased to see its use develop in West Mercia.

In each year of my term I have committed additional funding from my grant budget to services for victims of crime. I have also secured additional funding from government agencies to increase budgets for victims' services. Over the last few years, I have increased the amount of my commissioning budget which is allocated to victim services, which has in effect tripled my investment over the term. This additional investment has served to complement funding received from the Ministry of Justice grant, and has supported additional, specialist, outcome focussed services for Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Child Sexual Exploitation. Overall, I have increased budgets for victim services by 64% during my term of office. Within this, there have been specific increases for specialised services, such as a 83% increase in funding for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), a 255% increase in the budget for victims of child sexual exploitation and a 90% budget increase for supporting victims of sexual abuse and assault as well as a 35% increase in the budget for our wider victim service provision. My Commissioning team have a clear directive to invest in outcomes which are victim driven and deliver the best possible outcomes. They are also focused on tackling root causes of crime and victimisation to deliver the best possible results for our wider communities as well. I have seen some compelling case stories over my term of office where my funding has made some life changing (and in many cases lifesaving) interventions.

Tackling domestic abuse has been a key priority for me. Inflicting any kind of harm, be it emotional, physical or psychological, is not acceptable. I have funded Women's Aid to provide an IDVA Service across West Mercia. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk and to develop tailored options and safety plans. This service has seen a very high level of service users achieving the outcomes that were identified when they entered the IDVA service. With high levels of improved safety by reduced or managed risk being reported, and service users having access to immediate support or advice.

I have also increased my financial support to Women's Aid to enable them to provide a hospital based IDVA provision across West Mercia. This approach is nationally recognised best practice and improves the early identification of domestic abuse victims.

Recognising the complex nature of crime, and a need to prevent both repeat offending and victimisation, I have worked in partnership with Worcestershire Public Health on an innovative new programme focused towards high risk or serial perpetrators. The Drive Project is a response to domestic abuse that aims to reduce the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour.

In place Since October 2018, the Drive programme has worked with 209 high harm perpetrators (up to end Sep 2020), and has achieved reductions in high levels of physical abuse (55%), sexual abuse (50%), stalking and harassment (46%) and jealous, controlling and coercive behaviour (48%) An independent cost benefit analysis has shown the project provides significant savings on criminal justice, public health and local authority agencies.

In addition I have awarded a grant to West Mercia Women's Aid to provide a Children and Young People's service to work with young people whose parents are going through the Drive programme and who are being supported by IDVAs. This is to create a "whole family approach" to tackling domestic abuse behaviour. This service aims to work with 105 children across a year.

Following the success of the scheme in Worcestershire, I have recently secured a further £178,863 from the Home Office to extend the DRIVE project into Herefordshire. It is intended that Drive Herefordshire will go live in early 2021. Putting victims and survivors first is something I will continue to strive for, however if we're going to reduce the number, and severity, of incidences of domestic abuse then we need to target the source and get to the root problem and I hope the continued expansion of the Drive programme will go some way to achieving this.

I am also proud to support Drive with their Call to Action for a perpetrator strategy to be included as part of the Domestic Abuse Bill, which is currently making its way through Parliament. I am one of 125 signatories hoping to turn the tide on domestic abuse by standing together with other organisations for victims of domestic abuse.

I have further demonstrated my commitment to addressing the root causes of domestic abuse by securing an additional £207,163 from the Home Office to roll out the Respect Young People's programme. The programme will work with various organisations across West Mercia, supporting them in undertaking Respect accredited training. The training is designed to support those professionals working with young people who are displaying domestic abuse perpetrator

behaviour and will see over 400 staff trained from a variety of agencies including Police, Local Authority and Youth Justice Service across West Mercia.

I have provided new or increased funding for certain areas where I have identified additional needs. For example, male victims of sexual violence now have access to dedicated Independent Sexual Violence Advisors for the first time. In addition to this, I continue to provide significant financial support to AXIS and West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to provide Independent Sexual Advisor services across West Mercia. This grant maintains the current key frontline Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA), Male ISVA, Family ISVA and Children & Young Peoples (CHISVA) service provision within WMRSASC and to support continued delivery of the SELFIE training and awareness raising programme.

My commissioning team has recently concluded the recommissioning of both the CSE & ISVA services, providing a 3 year contract, which was awarded to WMRSASC. The new service model will provide increased flexibility and resilience as well as streamlining processes to remove any variations in service in line with my commitment to ensure all victims have access to the same level of service irrespective of where they live.

In addition, I have provided funding to the West Midlands Paediatric Sexual Assault Service (SARC) which is a region-wide service providing expert care for children and young people who have disclosed sexual assault, or who may have been subject to sexual abuse. Clients are seen by an experienced paediatrician with specialist training in forensic examination and are supported by a crisis worker. As a result of the pandemic I have worked closely with regional partners including NHS England & Improvement to extend the contract for the provision of this valuable service for an additional two years, to ensure continuity of service provision for some of the most vulnerable victims in our communities.

My approach to commissioning, and specifically designing of services, has received national praise and recognition and I am proud of the developments commissioned to help meet my vision of providing the highest care and support for victims and survivors of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, regardless of age of gender.

I remain passionate about working with other commissioners to support and strengthen the provision for victims across our four Local Authority areas, whilst also strengthening the partnership with the third sector. I am committed to improving the victim journey wherever possible to deliver the best possible outcomes and prevent scenarios where individuals may be let down by agencies failing to work together. It is only through true partnership working that we can maximise performance in this respect.

Building a more secure West Mercia

Throughout my term I have been committed to ensuring West Mercia Police is delivering the best possible service, in order to make our communities safer and protect people from harm.

While partner organisations and indeed the public can play key roles in making our communities safer, the need for an effective, efficient police force is clearly central to building a more secure West Mercia. As Commissioner I have worked on behalf of our communities to support, and where necessary, challenge our police force, by highlighting good practice, unearthing issues and then ensuring they are addressed and improved.

I set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan my desire for the force to achieve and maintain a *good* grading in HMICFRS PEEL inspections. I am disappointed that the force has not been able to attain this standard across the board. It is important to acknowledge however that there have been noticeable improvements in some areas and the force has embarked on a significant journey of reform. This has involved difficult decisions at times and has significantly challenged the force. However, much of this agenda has been about clearing out some of the issues that have limited force performance in the past and giving our police the best possible platform from which to succeed in the future. I trust that the force, and ultimately our communities, will reap the benefits of this work in terms of improved performance that is both more controlled and more sustainable, in the months and years ahead.

Policing demand

I listened when the public said they wanted more police, visible and accessible in their communities. Over the last three years I have provided funding for an additional 215 extra officers, bringing officer numbers to the highest level since 2012. This new cohort of officers along with an additional uplift of 93 officers from the Governments national recruitment programme, and the further 91 planned for in my 2020/21 budget proposal will help to make our communities safer and more secure.

In addition, the uplift in officer numbers has enabled the force to redesign how it investigates crimes. The new model will see up to an additional 88 investigative posts phased in across the organisation by April 2021 and will support the provision of consistent high quality investigations, ensuring better outcomes for the most vulnerable in our communities.

I have secured commitments from the Chief Constable around performance improvements to be delivered in conjunction with the uplift in police officers. With the officer uplift delivered at a record pace and ahead of schedule, these improvements can and should now be delivered for our 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. Prior to March 2020 demand on police nationally has been increasing consistently in recent years, driven by better recording, complexity of crime and willingness of victims to come forward, as well as genuine changes in crime patterns. The level of demand was reflected in calls to service. In West Mercia the force

saw an 18% increase in 999 calls comparing 2019/20 to 2016/7. However, analysis shows that around half of calls coming into the force do not relate to policing matters, demonstrating the need to better manage demand, including with communities and partners. During 2020/21 the volume of 999 and 101 calls has in some months seen significant increases. In August 2020 over 2,000 more 999 calls were made to the force than in August 2019. To better manage this demand, an online facility to provide members of the public with another way to report non-emergency crime and pass on information was introduced. This resulted in a 71% increase in online crime reports in July and August 2020.

The latest PEEL inspection report from HMICFRS recognises that the force has a *good understanding* of the demands on its services but also that *there are times when demand is placing a strain on the force*. Over time changes have been made to meet demand including amending the policing model, withdrawing from the Central Motorway Patrol Group (CMPG) which has delivered an improved service to our local communities and changing Harm Reduction Hubs into Problem Solving Hubs with staff based in all local policing areas dedicated to working with partners to identify, manage and reduce risk to our most vulnerable people, and playing a crucial role in helping to reduce harm and reduce demand across West Mercia.

More recently a Chief Superintendent has led on a force wide demand reduction programme which is having a real impact on demand. One example of this is a significant reduction in the number of unresourced incidents that are being managed on a daily basis. This is an issue that I have challenged the Chief Constable on at a number of holding to account meetings and it is pleasing to see the improvements made in the service to the public and the positive impact on officer and staff wellbeing.

Holding to Account: Monitoring and oversight

I want the public to have confidence and trust in my work, along with that of the force. To achieve this I have implemented new processes and structures to ensure I can effectively scrutinise force performance on behalf of our communities and push for change and improvements where needed. This has included the introduction a weekly performance dashboard which is circulated internally to key stakeholders and allows me to closely monitor weekly performance in key areas. I have also introduced a regular programme of local policing area visits enabling me to discuss performance and community issues with the local commands teams and to engage with officers and staff on an informal basis. This increased oversight along with my scrutiny of other performance data and attendance at a range of internal organisational meetings has provided me with effective oversight of wider force activity.

In May 2016 I introduced a monthly assurance meeting to hold the chief constable to account on force performance, the HMICFRS inspection programme and strategic organisational initiatives. I took this approach as it provides a clear and robust way for me to closely scrutinise key areas of the force and to hold the Chief Constable to account for ensuring the force's efficiency and effectiveness. Since its inception my holding to account programme has been subject to review to ensure it is continuing to be effective in exerting the appropriate influence upon the force on behalf of the public, raising matters of community concern and addressing force performance issues. As part of these changes I have introduced biannual Facebook Live

meetings, which have enabled people to submit questions and view the meeting either live or later. In April 2020 I held an additional Facebook live event, seeking reassurance around policing in our community during the current pandemic, giving the public the opportunity to ask questions about their police service and the current response, or raise any concerns. A more formal meeting on the force's approach to policing during the pandemic was held in November 2020.

The live events will be discussed further later in this report, but they have served an important purpose in significantly increasing public transparency of my scrutiny process, and ensuring communities have a clear, direct voice in policing.

It is important to me that my holding to account programme provides an opportunity to highlight community concerns for example public complaints to me on falling call handling service standards led me to hold a specific holding to account meeting on this area. Following my meeting with the Chief Constable a number of immediate improvements were implemented and it is one area of performance that I continue to review on a weekly basis.

I have sought reassurance from the Chief Constable regarding the reliability of the satisfaction survey and data obtained from it. As a result of raising this issue, the force has reviewed this process and changes made to the survey. These changes will improve how the force engages with victims to better understand their service delivery and identify where improvements can be made. I have also challenged the Chief Constable around the quality of case files submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service and in 2018/19 the force saw a 63% reduction in the number of files requiring additional work, leading to improvements in timeliness and quality.

Other key and recurring themes of my holding to account agenda have included child sexual exploitation, modern slavery, local policing, roads policing, rural crime, managing demand, burglary and the police workforce. In each case, actions have been followed up and performance reviewed in future meetings with outcomes published on my website.

Tackling Crime and Reducing Harm

Prior to March 2020 levels of recorded crime continued to increase nationally. West Mercia has not been immune to those increases, which have happened almost across the board. However, increases in recorded crime in West Mercia have been significantly lower than in other areas of England and Wales. These increases have undoubtedly been challenging, but more recently the rate of increase has slowed, and in 2019/20 there was only a 1% increase compared with the previous year. This is a smaller increase than the national picture, which saw a 3% increase over the same time period. There have also been some notable reductions in some crime areas during my term of office. For example, by the end of 19/20 levels of residential burglaries were 7% lower than they were before my election. Anti-social behaviour has also reduced by 11% compared to 2016 levels.

It is important to recognise that some of this increase is as a result of the introduction of new offence categories, such as malicious communications, which results in a high volume of alleged offences and changes to crime recording rules. The force has recently been subject to an HMICFRS inspection of its crime recording processes. The resulting Crime Data Integrity

report shows that since the last inspection in 2014, the force has improved its crime recording processes and the force is now rated as 'good', ahead of other similar forces. The report is encouraging news for victims of crime, confirming that in the vast majority of cases West Mercia is performing well, crimes are being accurately recorded, and at the point of initial reporting, victims are getting the right service.

The pandemic has had a considerable impact on crime trends since the end of March 2020 when the first lockdown period began. Initially there were significant reductions in the majority of crime types including a 40% decrease in residential burglary and a 44% decrease in vehicle offences during the first 3 months of 2020/21. Overall volumes for most crime types returned to levels seen pre-Covid-19 as the first lockdown ended

The exceptions to falling crime volumes in the first lockdown include domestic abuse, drug offences, cyber-crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB). Initially the volume of domestic abuse crimes reduced followed by a steady increase back to more typical and there has been a 4% increase comparing the first 7 months of 2020/21 to the same period in the previous year. Many victims of domestic abuse will have undoubtedly faced a deeply traumatic experience during lockdown. The additional funding I have secured during the pandemic is making sure that we're doing the very best we can for victims and survivors during these times.

I am aware that acquisitive crime, including burglary, robbery and theft harms our communities. A person's home and possessions often carry an emotional attachment and when crime interferes with this it can have a long lasting impact on its victims. West Mercia Police are committed to protecting people from these crimes. 'We Don't Buy Crime' demonstrates this commitment, by taking an innovative approach to reducing and disrupting the market for stolen goods and protecting homes and possessions by making them less attractive to the 'would-be criminal'.

'We Don't Buy Crime' is being rolled out to more than 150 communities across West Mercia. This rollout is now complete in around 120 towns and villages who have signed up to the programme since 2015, with more communities applying to join constantly. In total, more than 66,000 homes across West Mercia are now protected and offer a real deterrent to would-be criminals. Areas that have become designated Smartwater towns or villages have in many cases seen significant reductions in crime. For example, the very first Smartwater area, Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire, saw its burglary rate drop to zero in the year after adopting the scheme. The overall reduction in burglaries seen across the force area in recent years is significantly higher than the national average, illustrating the success of the initiative. Last year the scheme received national recognition when it was announced the winner of a national Tilley Award for its partnership approach.

The scheme provides households with SmartWater forensic technology along with signs displayed throughout the area warning thieves crime prevention measures have been taken. My 'Leading from the Front' project offers to fund 25% of the rollout costs to councillors interested in helping to protect their wards with Smartwater. Now Stafford Park in Telford has become the first industrial estate to get involved with business units protected with

SmartWater. This has resulted in a 50% reduction in burglary within the first 3 months of Smartwater activity in the area.

Working with West Mercia Police, and other partners, we have already made great improvements in the approach to tackling issues such as burglary and serious organised crime which ultimately makes people safer. Last year, working with the force and Telford and Wrekin Council I was successful in being awarded £550,000 of additional funding from the Home Office to implement a Safer Streets project in Brookside, Telford. This money will allow additional investment to be placed in preventative measures, such as improved home security or increased street lighting. By doing this it will make a real difference to the residents, and will hopefully give them a sense of community. I look forward to working with partners to achieve this.

Off the back of the Safer Streets project, I am pleased to be once again be working in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council on a new Safer Communities Project which will be launching this year. The project will build on the successes of the recent £550,000 Safer Streets project which was launched in Brookside last November and is still ongoing. The £1.5m funding, of which I have contributed £500,000, will go towards other areas within Telford & Wrekin to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and improve the quality of life for communities

West Mercia remains a comparatively safe place, but we are not immune to serious and organised crime (SOC). The impact of crimes such as child sexual abuse, county lines drug trades, modern slavery and human trafficking can be devastating. They can destroy individuals and damage entire communities. It became apparent from inspections by HMICFRS that performance in this area within West Mercia was not acceptable as the force was graded as inadequate in its response to SOC in March 2018.

Since that time, SOC has seen an even greater focus and become a more regularly recurring theme of my holding to account agenda. I am pleased that this scrutiny has led to major improvements for our communities in West Mercia, with the force now rated as good by inspectors, meaning more of our communities are protected from harm and more crime is being prevented or actively disrupted by our police.

The force has developed a clear understanding of its SOC threats and has in place a SOC Strategy and delivery plan to strengthen its approach to SOC. I have launched my own SOC Strategy which outlines how I will play my part and work with others to ensure our communities are safer and feel safer. A SOC delivery plan is in place to monitor progress against the recommendations set out in my strategy.

A key element of the progress the force has made in its approach to SOC is as a result of building and strengthening its work with partners. Each policing areas now has in place a SOC Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) which brings together partners to identify and manage organised crime groups in partnership. The SOCJAGs are run and managed locally, however central governance is provided by my Crime Reduction Board.

“The Shropshire SOCJAG is a shining example of how key agencies within our communities can come together to bring about change.” YP Team Manager and Safeguarding and Working with Families Lead for the Young Addaction charity in Shropshire

Organised crime groups (OCGs) operating across West Mercia routinely target and exploit the most vulnerable children and adults within our society. This has given rise to an emerging threat in the form of ‘County Lines’ whereby criminal gangs target the sale of drugs, often in smaller towns, exploiting vulnerable adults and young people through coercion, intimidation and violence. With its partners the force has had a number of notable successes in tackling this crime, but it remains a continuing challenge. For example, during the National Crime Agency’s (NCA) co-ordinated week of activity targeting county lines gangs in 2019, weapons and phones as well as more than £13,500 cash was recovered, thousands of pounds worth of drugs were seized including crack, cocaine, heroin and cannabis and over 30 arrests were made.

Modern slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) are emerging and developing areas of crime, commonly associated with SOC, which I am committed to tackling in West Mercia. To support this commitment I have allocated some of my grant funding to provide victims of modern slavery, human trafficking and forced marriage that are in crisis with immediate support by enabling West Mercia Police to provide individuals with immediate access to food, drink and secure accommodation for up to seven nights. I hope that the funding I have allocated to be used, when victims need temporary accommodation, will help bring them comfort and support before more permanent living arrangements can be made.

In 2019 using funding secured from the Police Transformation Fund, I brought together authorities and community groups to raise awareness and identify how everyone can work together to tackle modern slavery within West Mercia. MSHT has been a focus for my holding to account scrutiny meeting with the Chief Constable and as a result I am reassured that the learning from this event is being used by the force to improve its approach to this issue and better protect vulnerable people.

Drug trafficking and supply is the primary crime type for just over 60% of all active OCGs in West Mercia. Drug misuse and is an inherently complex issue and there is no single solution. I have published a draft version of my own drugs strategy. This strategy sets out how I am committed to playing my part, both in terms of my own role, and working with others to deliver the best possible results.

Serious violence, often associated with SOC, has been in the spotlight over the last year following the publication of the national Serious Violence Strategy and a national rise in knife crime. Recognising these threats I have integrated into both my drugs strategy and my SOC strategy commitments to preventing and supporting child victims of criminal exploitation (CCE). Both strategies set out my aspirations to prevent the problem at source through early intervention and have been used to help shape my current and future commissioning approach.

The additional 88 investigative posts secured through the police officer uplift programme will support the provision of consistent high quality investigations needed to target those causing most harm in our communities.

I am committed to improving the lives of young people and preventing them from going down the wrong path in life. The trauma that these individuals can experience in their lives leaves them vulnerable, which greatly increases the risk of them being exploited or entering the criminal justice system. To support this commitment, 2020 saw the launch of the new CLIMB service, a unique programme providing positive activities to young people who may otherwise be drawn into criminal activity. CLIMB is delivered by The Children's Society and works with children and young people aged 13-17 who may be at risk of being criminally exploited.

Despite the challenges of launching during the early months of the pandemic I am pleased that CLIMB has been well embedded into local referral pathways within West Mercia exploitation groups as well as amongst partner agencies, and is seeing results. Up to the end of December 2020, the service had received 185 appropriate referrals, with 39 of those currently receiving a service. Following clear evidence of need both in the force and within communities last year I also committed an additional £96,875 of resources to provide West Mercia Exploitation and Vulnerability trainers. These trainers are employed within the force to help address the associated harm that often comes with serious acquisitive crime. The trainers provide valuable inputs to organisations and community groups to help them recognise the signs that someone may be being exploited and what to do if they do suspect they are. Between April and December 2020 128 sessions have been conducted across 119 organisations, to 2905 recipients. Of these recipients, an average of 97% said that as a result of the training they had an increased awareness of vulnerability factors and felt confident that they could recognise and report concerns of exploitation.

My current funding to diversionary projects includes £280,000 per annum to YSS for a West Mercia-wide 1:1 mentoring service supporting 13-24 year olds, in, or at risk of being involved in, the CJS to access support services and community based activities and the ARC project providing one to one support to young adults aged between 16 and 24. A study of the social return on investment (SROI) of these projects over a 12 month period has shown that based on actual costs and outcomes achieved by the project for the period is £6.11 for every £1 of investment. Over this time the projects supported 225 young people.

"I have calmed down a lot. I now listen to people. I get to classes on time. Before, I didn't have anyone to talk to and I would let things build up and then scream and shout and punch doors. That rarely happens now" 14 year old male service user at risk of exclusion from school

I have worked with the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) to collectively grant £135k to recruit a 'CCE link worker' in every local policing area. The 'trusted adult' works with children and young people who are being criminally exploited (high risk of harm/risk assessed as 'red'). The funded posts are embedded within partnership panels and Children's Services dependant on local area requirements. This directed initiative works in partnership with the Branch project, which is funded by me to support children and young people who are victims of sexual exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) continues to be a key priority both at a force, regional and national level. I awarded £305,735 to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to run the Branch Project, which provides educational interventions and support

to young people who are at risk of or have been a victim of CSE in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire. In 2019/20, 128 young people have been referred into the project, receiving tailored education, intervention or support to children and young people (CYP) who are at risk of or have been a victim of CSE in Worcestershire, Shropshire, and Herefordshire.

Branch case study – 14 year old male

The young person's family are already known to Children's Services following a referral regarding concerns raised about young person's behaviour out in the community. Children's services deemed the young person as high risk of child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. The young person has had several missing episodes from the family home. A CSE risk assessment was undertaken due to the client going missing from home. The CSE risk assessment scored as medium risk. The CSE assessment highlighted immediate concerns in respect to the young person's unsafe use of the internet and the exchange of recent inappropriate images/videos of a sexual nature. The young person has also disclosed that during missing periods from home he has been sexually abused. The young person has some additional vulnerabilities as he has historically experienced bullying and he has been required to be a young carer.

Following the initial referral into Branch the young person was removed, for his safety, from his home address and placed with his paternal grandparent out of county. During this period it was emphasised that the Branch worker will need to be in place prior to his return to the family home and available for intensive weekly support.

The client has returned back home to reside with his family and has a full support package around him, including; a Divert Worker to engage him with positive activities, a family support worker to support family mediation and the Branch worker. Branch are currently seeing the client on a weekly basis and client is aware that the support is around building appropriate healthy relationships and the sexual exploitation that he has experienced.

Too many people are losing their lives on our roads, 44 in the last year alone and it's time more was done. Safer Roads is one of the key policing priorities for West Mercia Police and I welcome this clear strategic focus. My investment in additional officers has enabled the force to provide an additional 19 dedicated roads policing PC posts. A two month snapshot of the work undertaken by the first 9 officers into these posts shows that they submitted 139 Traffic Offence Reports and made 69 arrests, including 54 for drink or drug driving, one of a male on suspicion of murder following his vehicle triggering an ANPR camera, and one for human trafficking. This highlights the valuable contribution being made to keeping our communities safe on the roads.

As part of my own commitment, I hope to raise more awareness of road safety and reduce the amount of those being killed or injured, as well as the number of those committed road traffic offences, through further projects and initiatives.

To support this I have developed a Roads Safety Strategy and In 2018 I chose to use a proportion of the reserves built up by the Safer Roads Partnership to provide both targeted and

strategic funding opportunity to address the rising number of people killed and seriously injured on West Mercia's roads. I have invested £485,000 in MORSE which is an innovative safer roads partnership between YSS, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. MORSE aims to make our roads safer by reducing the number of risks taken by drivers throughout West Mercia. They do not concentrate on the offence in isolation but look holistically at the individual and focus on providing personalised support around their needs.

"We continue to receive referrals for individuals who are facing multiple life challenges, who are at risk of social isolation and who are facing many inequalities in their life. Building a trusting relationship, where the support delivered is linked to the individual's strengths and skills, increases motivation and gives the individuals hope that they can succeed" (from a MORSE Area Summary Report).

No one should have to suffer and not receive the support they so desperately need in order to recover and carry on with their lives. I am pleased that the money I have recently awarded to RoadPeace will provide a victim advocate located within the VAL to provide support and advice to victims of serious injury collisions, piloting in Shropshire initially. A West Mercia support group for families affected will also be set up, along with the provision of some information guides and online resilience programmes to ensure those affected are signposted to invaluable help.

I have also provided a further £250,000 to be invested in the Local Policing and Community Ambassadors Fund (LPCAF) for safer roads which has provided support to 67 initiatives so far. These pots of money will allow more focus to be placed on something that is a priority, and concern, for everyone. I hope that people will be encouraged to apply for funding knowing that they could be making a real difference on the roads of West Mercia.

I have extended my grant support to the Pathfinder Project, to run a volunteer led project which is designed to reduce the number of road traffic collisions, casualties (KSIs) and convictions amongst vulnerable novice drivers, i.e. 17-24 year olds. I have also developed and implemented a Roads focus Campaign with Worcestershire and Shropshire Councils. Further details can be found in the Reassure part of this report.

"The young people we support come from a variety of disadvantaged backgrounds and the 8 young people that participated on the course had a variety of needs and issues.

As professionals working with these young people we saw our young people grow throughout the week as they participated on your course. The young people engaged with the instructors, developed their skills and mastered the art of driving. All the young people that participated in your course gained something back from it" Care worker accompanying young people on Pathfinder

Reducing reoffending

To begin to break the cycle of crime and reoffending 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. Through my Crime Reduction Board I am able to bring

together representatives from key agencies to ensure this approach is happening in West Mercia.

The Drive Project, outlined earlier in this report is a new response to domestic abuse focusing on priority (high-risk or serial) perpetrators is an innovative project attempting to break this cycle and reduce the number of child and adult victims.

I have also supported Willodene Farm for the LINC project (Local Initiatives Nurturing Change) with a three year grant for £130,000. The project is for women at risk of entering the criminal justice system, or are in it to reduce their risk of offending. During 2018/19 there were 155 referrals to the project, 39% coming from the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). The project achieved an 81% engagement rate and an assessment of service users shows that 79% made progress on education and training, 55% on employment and 49% on substance misuse / alcohol.

“I used to look forward to my time at Willowdene, so much so that when my 12-week program was up I asked if I could keep attending. I continued to attend for some time after this. I began to feel like an adult, I was able to spend time at home and accept that I needed to take responsibility for my own actions” Woman completing the course, who is now in employment and no longer using illegal substances

I have provided approximately £250,000 per annum to drug interventions programmes across West Mercia. Working within the local criminal justice system the service supports the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme, providing arrest referral support in custody and the treatment element of community sentences with the aim of reducing offending and re-offending and making West Mercia more secure.

Case study - Shropshire DIP

C was managed within the IOM Unit due to his prolific offending behaviour and chaotic use of heroin and illicit diazepam. Despite many previous community probation orders and many prison sentences this pattern of behaviour and the consequences to others and the wider community continued. Family relationships were non-existent and C relied on acquaintances to let him sofa surf with him not having a home of his own and little opportunity to be able to do so.

Following his release from prison 10 months ago the IOM team case managed C closely. He had frequent appointments weekly and the support and help he was offered meant he finally accepted the treatment interventions from SRP. Over May and June he began to fully engage with the support offered to him. As his stability developed he worked with other agencies to help him with his housing need, access to benefits and there is now a clear plan for C to move forward and continue to reduce his levels of risk.

Collaboration and partnership working

Building a safer West Mercia is not and cannot be the sole responsibility of any one person or organisation and I remain committed to developing strong collaboration and partnership arrangements to deliver shared outcomes, improve services for our communities and achieve

efficiencies. This has also been a prominent feature of my push to reform West Mercia Police, in order to deliver increased effectiveness and efficiency.

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is a complex web of partners, roles, budgets and priorities. An integral part of the CJS is the courts and this has been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially very few trials were heard, resulting in victims facing a longer wait for justice, and their associated anxiety and trauma being prolonged. During the last year I have pressed ministers to take action to address the courts back log and I have also increased capacity in victim services, made offers to work with partners and supported innovation. I am committed to doing what I can but others need to step forward as well. While all of West Mercia's magistrates courts are now open and is one of the only areas which in the last few months has been able to clear its pre Covid backlog in these courts, the picture in the Crown Courts is less positive and I shall continue to press for improvements. Victims want to move forward and recover. Part of that requires a justice system that works for them

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) have moved their headquarters into Hindlip Hall to share with facilities with West Mercia Police and share a new state of the art OCC with the force, other buildings are also shared including Bromsgrove Police Station. Whilst I welcome the efficiencies this will bring, the changes are about more than just buildings, it's about growing skills, relationships, sharing experiences and working together to adopt a joint problem solving approach. The two organisations already work hand in hand, with a shared ultimate aim of keeping people safe. An example of this is an initiative between Hereford & Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS), Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to support West Mercia Police (WMP) in the searches for high risk missing persons. The type of equipment the fire and rescue services can bring to this type of immediate search assists all those involved. Incidents may benefit from the use of thermal imaging cameras, lighting, trauma packs and mobile mapping data held on vehicle mounted IT systems.

There remain significant opportunities for further improvements in local police and fire collaboration. There is currently a distinct lack of scrutiny and analysis of potential benefits of collaboration across both services. It has been established and supported through independent business case, public consultation, successive governments, and the High Court, that a transition to joint and single governance of our police and fire services would best enable those benefits to be delivered for West Mercia's communities, including the chance to re-invest significant amounts of public money in vital frontline services through the abolition of the Fire Authorities. Last year the Home Office confirmed the transfer to joint governance cannot take place before 2021's PCC elections, due to ongoing legal delays caused by the local Fire Authorities and the Covid-19 pandemic. I fully accept, understand and support the Minister's decision at this time. However, it remains the case that joint governance would benefit our local communities and emergency services. The public is right to demand the best possible police and fire services, with the maximum amount of resource focused on the frontline.

Throughout my term I have provided each of West Mercia's five Community Safety Partnerships with a ring-fenced budget, since 2016/17 this has amounted to £2.45M. This budget is spent on proactive community safety initiatives, addressing local needs and creating a safer and more secure West Mercia. During this time I developed a new policy for CCTV to

ensure funding could be given to each of the CSPs to be used on new and improved CCTV equipment. The policy has required CSPs to work with their local policing teams and communities to ensure there is a more joined-up approach. My commitment means that up to £1.57M has been made available to make West Mercia's communities feel safer and more secure. It has also ensured, for the first time, that this sort of funding is available fairly and equitably right across the force area, with a consistent, transparent approach for all parties. This had not previously been the case in West Mercia, resulting in some areas disproportionately benefitting compared to others.

As part of my drive to ensure the funding I provide is used as effectively as possible I have worked with the CSPs and the force to bring the analytical support I was funding via the CSPs into the force intelligence team. The result is there are now three full time posts, who are able to provide analytical products under the direction of and for the CSPs with the professional guidance of force analysts. One of the early benefits of this is that the CSP analysts were able to develop and produce the new serious and organised crime profiles for the force and partners.

I have worked collaboratively with regional colleagues to ensure that the Strategic Policing Requirement is met and I maintain oversight of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU), National Air Police Service (NPAS), Roads Policing, Counter Terrorism (CT) and other national programmes. Two regional policy officers shared between the four Police and Crime Commissioners in the West Midlands Region have been invaluable in strengthening our scrutiny and oversight of key national programmes which impact on our region.

Together with the other PCC's in the West Midlands Region I jointly commissioned a six month study into criminality in prisons. The report has assisted in identifying an approach to collectively tackle organised crime gangs which are embedded in our prison system. These organised gangs are not only causing harm in the prisons but in our communities too, and I will continue to work with the government and other partners to ensure this harm is reduced.

Reforming West Mercia

Enhancing and Improving West Mercia Police

When I was elected as Police and Crime Commissioner I inherited a force that spent just 36% of its resources each year on police officer pay and overtime. This gives a stark insight into why it has been quite so necessary to drive reform in our force and make it such a central pillar of my work as Commissioner. Our communities fund policing, with a legitimate expectation that their

money will be used effectively and efficiently, and will be focused as much as possible on frontline policing.

Whilst I clearly accept that figure reaching 100% could never be realistic, it is clear that 36% was also not high enough. We are now in a position where closer to 50% of West Mercia's annual resources are now used on police officer pay and overtime, while significant progress has also been made in making our police officers more visible and accessible to communities, and restoring control of our own resources. These decisions and changes have not always been comfortable or convenient, but they have always been in the best interests of our police force and our communities. It is clear that there remains further potential for significant improvements in this area. Delivering this will need the same drive and focus in the years ahead.

To provide our communities with the most effective and efficient police service and after careful consideration, in October 2018, the Chief Constable and I jointly announce our intention to withdraw from the strategic alliance arrangement with Warwickshire Police. Intensive negotiations with Warwickshire Police followed. These negotiations did not reach resolution before the end of the original notice period leading the Home Secretary to mandate both forces to continue the existing collaboration agreement for a further 6 months, until April 2020.

When a mutual agreement couldn't be made, an independent team was brought in by the Home Office to advise. Their advice highlighted a number of areas for the provision of hosted services and for an agreement of reasonable termination costs. This sees West Mercia providing transactional, forensic services and file storage on a service provider basis for 18 months and continuing to collaborate on IT services. The new agreements to provide service and collaboration are at no cost to West Mercia as they are on a full cost recovery basis.

Embracing technology

The public want to see police officers on their streets and at the heart of their communities. The force I inherited did not have an efficient approach to officer visibility, as its outdated technology forced police officers to stay shut in police stations. I demonstrated my commitment to improving police visibility in our communities and ensuring our officers can provide an effective and efficient service by investing £4.2m to enable mobile technology to be rolled out across the force following a successful trial in Evesham. Officers across West Mercia are now equipped with smartphones and laptops, meaning they can work on the move and spend more time with the public. As officers no longer have to frequently return to police stations to do admin work, on average, an extra hour per officer per shift is being spent out and about in the community.

My £1M investment in body worn video has seen a rollout of this technology to all frontline officers and staff. This project was delivered ahead of time and on budget and since going live in July 2017 has resulted on average 13,000 BWV pieces of footage recorded and uploaded to the system every month, of which approximately 575 are shared with the CPS (Apr – Oct 2019). Body worn video is playing a significant part in my plans to reform and modernise West Mercia

Police and I am pleased to see it having such a positive impact for victims, communities and the police. Not only does it provide a higher quality of service for victims with high quality evidence which increases the chance of conviction, but it makes the police service more accountable with the increased transparency helping to reassure the public and giving our communities greater confidence in the police service.

The proven benefits of mobile technology has enabled me to invest a further £250,000 in the same equipment to enable same technology to be rolled out to the 300 or so Special Constables in West Mercia who volunteered a combined total of almost 53,000 hours of service in 2019.

There are many projects under my 'reform' agenda and the force has a number of significant transformational projects that are a key part of these reforms. I am committed to working with the force to mitigate any impact resulting from the alliance termination to secure the planned efficiencies. For example, negotiations with the supplier of a new Command and Control System, Saab SAFE, for the Operational Control Centre (OCC) established West Mercia Police as the sole customer. The transformation programme of digital services has been coordinated jointly across both forces to enable smooth transitioning of applications and services to new infrastructure. West Mercia are on target to achieve withdrawal from the old shared network by the target date of March 2021. Warwickshire are still working towards their new infrastructure.

My aspiration to modernise West Mercia's technology is not limited to the force as I am supportive of wider reforms to the criminal justice system. This has included working with partners to introduce Video Remand Hearings (VRH) across Shropshire and Herefordshire. Regrettably this technology has shown to have had a detrimental impact organisationally for West Mercia Police as the force has had to assign operational resources in order to manage the new process, undermining its ability to protect and safeguard local communities. The impact on policing has been replicated across the country and, as a result, the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) announced they wouldn't be supporting the current approach from 1st December. It is my duty, as Commissioner, to ensure that the communities of West Mercia receive the best possible policing service and unfortunately the current approach to video remand hearings is undermining that ability. I have called on the Government to consider how this situation moves forward, and to ensure that the communities of West Mercia don't suffer from how it is currently running. I am willing to work with the Government and partners to see it is improved.

Investing in our estate

Our communities have legitimate expectations around police estates. They expect them to be fit for purpose, located where they are most effective and efficient, and where they can help provide visibility, accessibility and reassurance. My work around estates has focused on delivering against those needs.

This is being achieved through a combination of new build, refurbishment and co-location projects across the portfolio. The police estate needs to be fit for purpose to enable a modern and agile police force to deliver good quality services to the people they serve.

Investment has included construction of a new OCC sited as Police Headquarters, shared with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The co-location of police and fire incident control teams, operational support teams, partner emergency planning and more recently the Victims Advice Line equips officers and staff with the information and flexibility they need to enable them to work more efficiently and respond more quickly to members of the public. Police headquarters now also houses the fire service headquarters and realises greater public value through reducing running costs and providing opportunities for back office efficiencies and maximises the benefits of proximity to the shared Operations Communications Centre.

By working with partners, as part of the One Public Estate Programme (OPE), I have been able to identify where savings can be made by co-locating buildings without reducing the level of service the public receives. Initially four sites in Shropshire have been identified for co-location with different partners in Bridgnorth, Wem, Whitchurch and Shrewsbury town centre.

My Strategic Estate Manager was appointed to coordinate projects on behalf of policing and to review our estate management strategy to determine its effectiveness in terms of how the physical estate and built environment supports the delivery of policing in West Mercia. This work will enable a new approach to be taken, remodelling the estate which will provide for a more modern, fit-for-purpose estate, together with a service delivery model that reflects our collective strategic, operational and transformation activities, goals and objectives

With the withdrawal of Worcestershire County Council from Place Partnership to take effect in March 2021, I and the remaining partners consider the most effective and efficient option for the future of Place Partnership Limited (PPL) is to proceed with a Members Voluntary Liquidation, plus re-establishment of in-house services at each Authority.

This decision has not been taken lightly but I believe the establishment of the in-house teams represents an ideal opportunity to provide both a better value for money and enhanced property management service model. An insourced model will enable West Mercia and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) to realise their mid and long term visions as well as delivering their Estates and Financial strategies.

Investing in people

Providing people with the right equipment and resources to do their job is only part of creating a modern and innovative force. Investing in people to ensure they are reaching their potential and supporting their health and wellbeing is as important as any changes to ways of working or estates. My decision to provide funding for an additional 215 officers is improving resilience and enabling the force to better manage operational demand and provide an increased police presence in our communities.

Our communities value their police and have an expectation that the people that look after them will in turn be looked after themselves. People also expect their police force to represent the communities they serve, making it vitally important to ensure the right commitment to

robust, diverse recruitment programmes and ongoing training and welfare. A happy workforce where officers and staff are challenged to improve their own performance will inevitably lead to better performance for the force and our communities as well.

I made a commitment in my Safer West Mercia Plan to hold the Chief Constable to account to properly invest in the workforce and develop officers, staff and volunteers to make sure they are reaching their full potential. I have followed through on this commitment and clear demonstrable outcomes of that process have been published and implemented. This includes a commitment from the force to review all promotion policies and processes to ensure fairness and transparency. This review is ongoing and will inform development of other key projects including the review of the professional development review process and the development of the force's approach to talent management and leadership development.

2019 was the year of wellbeing in West Mercia, and it is important to me as Commissioner that the force provides adequate, tailored support for all officers and staff, particularly those exposed to work related traumatic events. The improved approach not only includes the specialist support for those affected by PTSD and other mental health related issues, but a range of other schemes and initiatives, such as a travelling wellbeing bus where free health check-ups can be accessed, Backup Buddy a free app with 24 hour support and advice, peer supporters trained by the charity Mind, mental health first aid training, multi-faith chaplaincy and critical incident debriefs focused around the impact on officers and staff.

West Mercia Police have recently launched a new People Strategy which further demonstrates the force's commitment to effectively supporting and empowering its workforce. A key objective within the strategy is to build the personal resilience of the workforce. This involves developing a trauma informed approach to promote recovery and support individuals through their career journey. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of this strategy.

The Occupational Health Team, welfare officers and the force's employee assistance programme are well embedded and have been utilised to provide officers and staff with physical and psychological support during the pandemic. A Covid Welfare and Testing team was also established and took on responsibility for assessing requirements for shielding, overseeing workforce testing and results, and providing expert advice and guidance to the workforce.

We must never lose sight of the fact that police officers, and all those who do an extraordinary role in protecting us, are ordinary people, with ordinary lives. We must never underestimate the impact that assaults can have not only on those who are assaulted but on their loved ones, and those around them. This is why I launched my *#Behind the Badge* campaign in January 17 aimed at reducing violence against police and improving how the issue is tackled nationally. The Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 came into effect in November 2018 however, my campaign is ongoing with a dedicated campaign page and regular social media and video content.

Other successful initiatives include an Alliance wide apprentice scheme, providing opportunities for young people to take part in a 12 month apprentice scheme, taking part in 'Police Now' a national talent programme for graduates and implemented a new Police

Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) programme. The first intake of PCDA student officers started in January 2020 and the Degree-holder Entry Programme (DHEP) for recruits with a degree commenced in July 2020. These new routes into policing have attracted a more diverse pool of candidates and the new intakes have been more representative of our communities in terms of gender and ethnicity.

"Having had a keen interest in both numbers and people my whole life, I am very interested in a career in the financial sector. Seeing that there was an opportunity available to train at West Mercia Police in this area was amazing because I instantly knew that the work I'd be doing was going to have a positive impact and really matter to the greater community" Finance Assistant Apprentice.

As part of my own commitment to investing in people for the last three years I have successfully recruited a graduate policy intern in my office for a 12 month period. 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 am also committed to ensuring that the workforce of West Mercia better reflects the makeup of our communities and the uplift in additional police recruit numbers I have provided should be providing a real opportunity for the force to become more diverse and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure everything is done to achieve this. A series of holding to account sessions were held over the summer (2020) to better understand concerns of our communities and to hold the Chief Constable to account for improving diversity, equality and inclusion internally and externally.

To further support the positive action initiatives the force has recently launched the 'Step' programme in partnership with its staff networks to focus on improving workforce representation at the point of recruitment, across ranks and within specialist roles, ensuring attraction, retention and development of a diverse and inclusive workforce. The programme provides a range of support and services for new recruits and existing members of the workforce who identify with a protected characteristics and builds on my commitments to ensure the workforce better reflects the demographic make-up of our communities.

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

I promised to build communities that not only are safe, but feel safe as well. This has been a key and central focus of my work to reassure our communities in West Mercia.

My decisions to increase officer numbers in West Mercia were informed by operational factors such as the increased demand seen in forces nationwide. However, a significant consideration was also ensuring greater reassurance within our communities. It is crucial that people feel confident that the police have the right resources, in the right places, to provide the right response when required and to proactively prevent crime. This is why I secured commitments from the Chief Constable that the uplift in officer numbers would deliver improvements across the board around public confidence and victim satisfaction. West Mercia is now at its increased establishment, with further uplifts proposed, and mechanisms are in place to ensure those associated service improvements are delivered for our communities.

Along with simply increasing officer numbers, I have also worked to increase the capacity, visibility and accessibility of our police in order to provide community reassurance. Every officer and special constable in West Mercia now has technology such as smartphones and laptops, enabling them to spend more time out in the community, rather than stuck behind a desk in a police station. Pilots of this equipment found it enabled an extra hour of community visibility, per officer, per shift. This is a significant benefit both for the force, and our communities.

Throughout the pandemic the force has sought to provide a higher level of visible police presence within communities to provide public reassurance and maintain public confidence. The force has recently received an additional £466,243 of Government funding to support more visible policing in West Mercia around Covid-19. This funding has provided additional Covid patrols across all the policing areas. These patrols are not only bringing visible reassurance to our communities but also carrying out valuable enforcement work to target those individuals and business who choose to flout the regulations.

As Commissioner it is my duty to provide oversight and scrutiny to make sure that West Mercia Police is acting in the best interests of the communities it serves. Feedback I have received from our communities and my holding to account of the Chief Constable has reassured me that the force's response to enforcement throughout the pandemic has been proportionate and effective; the emphasis being on engaging, explaining and encouraging, with enforcement being used as a last resort. As Commissioner I will continue to stand up for what our community needs to be kept safe, and that includes, for the time being, the policing response to Covid-19.

I have supported new initiatives around officer accessibility, making it easier and more convenient for communities to get in touch with police when they need them. Personal contact numbers and emails have been published for each local Safer Neighbourhood Team. The new force website enables much more convenient access to online crime reporting and services

such as firearms licence renewal. In response to the pandemic this facility was extended to give concerned members of the public the ability to report Covid breaches in a dedicated area of the site. The 'Open for Business' programme enables communities to see a police officer in a police station without an appointment, any time they are available. These are all valuable improvements in terms of giving reassurance to communities that they can access the right help from the police, when they need it.

It is clear from both operational demand and community feedback that the force needs to maintain and enhance wherever possible a strong, visible presence. My budget proposals for 2021/22 set out how I intend to work with the force to deliver a community policing charter, which will give reassurance to the public that they will receive what they need and reasonably expect from their police force. This approach will ensure the force makes best possible use of all available resources to understand communities and the issues affecting them and make sure local communities are informed about and understand the work the force are doing on their behalf.

I have invested in the creation of new officer posts to support and reassure our rural and business communities, doubling these resources in 2018/19. These officers are dedicated solely to the specific issues that impact rural and business communities, building important relationships and enabling a greater voice from the community to understand and act on their concerns. In addition to this, I have been pleased to see new wildlife officers established across the police force, again helping to provide vital reassurance that West Mercia has the right skills and resources to effectively address the issues in each individual community.

Within my own office, I have worked hard to fulfil my pledge to be open, honest, transparent and ensure our communities could have faith in my actions as Commissioner. When I was sworn into office I made commitments that I have worked hard to stay true to throughout my term in office. I signed up to a code of conduct, aligned to the Nolan Principles of conduct in public life, and have maintained that approach throughout. I have ensured information is proactively published around registers of interests, expenses and gifts & hospitality. Recruitments into key posts such as Chief Constable or Deputy PCC have been done via thorough, transparent processes, involving key partners such as West Mercia's Police and Crime Panel to ensure the public could be reassured.

I have increased transparency around how I hold the Chief Constable to account and how decisions have been made in the Alliance, publishing minutes from every meeting on my website. I have also initiated public holding to account meetings twice each year, as a means of giving our communities the chance to directly put their questions to the Chief Constable. These events are streamed live over social media and have focused on issues such as rural crime, police budgets and community policing, and to date have attracted more than 9,600 engagements from the viewing public.

I have actively sought to increase engagement with our communities. This will be discussed in more detail later in this report, however it always has been, and remains, an important

element of my reassurance work. Ensuring that our communities have a strong voice in local policing and can be confident in the work I am doing on their behalf has been a guiding principle for me as Commissioner. To that end, I have delivered a new, improved, and more cost-effective website to make it easier for communities to find out about my work, delivered significant growth in digital engagement, taken part in thousands of face-to-face engagements with communities and partners, conducted numerous formal consultations and published full responses. A new contact management system has been introduced in my office to cope with increased public correspondence and ensure every item is managed effectively. I have also developed new mechanisms to reliably gauge perceptions like public confidence, police visibility and accessibility, and public trust in their police force. All of these are discussed in detail within the 'public engagement' section of this report.

I pledged that as Commissioner I would enable and empower our communities to play an active role in not only supporting policing, but also to take leading roles in some scenarios. I have worked hard to deliver on this promise through new funding, equipment, opportunities and relationships. In the police force, I have supported the ongoing development of the Special Constabulary, police service volunteers, and the police cadets programme. In total, our police service volunteers in West Mercia contributed almost 77,000 hours of service a year until March 2020. The Covid pandemic has severely impacted the availability of volunteers, with around a 50% reduction in hours contributed, but is still to be commended in the challenging circumstances. The average monthly contribution by Special Constables now also stands at 24hrs per month, compared to approximately 12 at the start of my term. The number of police support volunteers has also increased from 92 (2016/17) to a current figure of 139. These measures demonstrate the remarkable commitment and strength of support from our community for their police force. The contribution of volunteers to policing makes a real difference and I have sought to recognise that by, for example, ensuring our Special Constables are equipped with mobile technology and body worn video, as any regular officer now is. The success of the police cadets programme is also notable, with young people often moving into successful public service careers, and even joining the force, following completion of their cadet programme.

I have worked closely with Neighbourhood Watch across West Mercia to provide new signage across the force area, and establish new social media pages to ensure communities are informed about local crime and policing in their area. These pages have proven extremely successful, with over 20 of them now established, managed and maintained across the force area. The pages have more than 48,000 individual followers (48% growth since December 2018), and achieved 61% growth in terms of reach in the first 11 months of 2019, taking messages to a total of 629,000 people. The convenient medium and community ownership, coupled with support from the police, have helped create a real success story. The number of more conventional Neighbourhood Watch groups in West Mercia has also grown to 464 during my term of office, with 47 new groups established in 2019 alone. As a result of Covid, and other factors, the number of Neighbourhood Watch Groups has diminished. However there have been a number of people requesting to start new groups up. It is also worth noting that

other groups have developed to cover off different community needs, such as PubWatch, Rural Watch and Horse Watch.

Early in my Commissionership I doubled the amount of equipment available to Community Speedwatch groups, in order to enable more areas to help identify and tackle local speeding issues. In 2016, West Mercia had just 11 of these groups. I am pleased to report that number has now nearly quadrupled to 40, with a further 8 close to starting. Reassurance is a key element associated with these groups. In some cases, that reassurance is that a problem is being fully understood, and enforcement action will be taken by the police and road safety teams. However, in other cases, reassurance has simply been that perceptions of speed have not necessarily been accurate, and issues are not as bad as some residents feared. In either case, these groups have played an important part in ensuring local road safety issues are better understood and reassuring wider communities.

Rural and Business Crime

West Mercia is a predominantly rural police force area with over a third of its residents living in smaller towns and villages, where farming and the countryside are focal points for the community and represent major parts of the local economy. Rural crime can have a significant cost, in a way that is more than just financial. It brings increased stress and pressure which impacts on mental health, leading people to feel more isolated. My rural crime strategy sets out how I will actively work with communities and partners to tackle rural crime to build safer more secure rural communities.

I am committed to ensuring communities have the same efficient and effective service regardless of where they are. This is why I have substantially increased the level of investment in rural crime from £51,000 in 2016/17 to over £270,000 in the current financial year. My investment has enabled the force to appoint 5 dedicated Rural and Business Officers (RABOs) to work with local communities to provide support, advice and reassurance. This resource has been further strengthened through my precept to provide warranted officers in each local policing areas whose role is focused on rural and business crime. These officers work alongside the RABOs as part of a Wider Problem Solving team. I have also allocated funding to train additional number of officers to gain extra skills as Wildlife Crime Officers and to purchase vehicles and equipment to support those staff and officers working in this area.

'It was good to meet you yesterday and to know someone is bothering with us as sometimes these days we do feel slightly forgotten. We discussed the matter of farm and site security which we are looking into so thanks once again'. Shropshire Farmer

Cyber-crime

Cyber-crime remains a national policing priority and can have a detrimental effect across all our communities. To help raise awareness of cyber-crime I have provided West Mercia Police with £11,000 to work with Get Safe Online. At the time of my election West Mercia was one of only two forces nationwide not to be part of the programme. Their website is a unique resource

providing practical advice for individuals and business in the fight against fraud, identity theft, viruses and many other problems encountered online. As well as online resources Get Safe Online have also run a cyber training event for force personnel and partners; and attended two public events in September 2019, the Ludlow Food Festival and Worcester 10k where over 9,000 cyber advice packs were distributed. When I was elected, West Mercia was one of only two forces nationally not to be a part of this initiative. I am pleased that I was able to urgently address this and provide access to these valuable resources.

In 2019 I provided a £30,000 grant to the UK Cyber Security Forum to part fund an exciting and innovative cyber security training project which seeks to provide supported training for vulnerable autistic adults in cyber security. In a 7 month period the project supported 22 people on training, three of whom went on to secure employment in a related field.

A 25 year old man came to us via an enquiry from his father who was concerned that he spent most of his time alone in the house on the computer. At first he was extremely anxious about attending and missed a couple of sessions because his anxiety overwhelmed him. He has begun to feel relaxed and safe about attending now as he recognises there is no pressure on him. He is very interested in the subject and is exploring becoming self-employed.

More recently, I have also provided support for free cyber security events for local businesses, which have also been well attended and received in the community.

Police Ethics

Ensuring that West Mercia Police upholds an ethical policing culture is an important part of my role and throughout my term I have liaised closely with the Force's Professional Standards Department (PSD) to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and complainants receive the service they need. During this time there has been an improvement in the recording of complaints by PSD with 92% recorded within 10 days by the end of 2018/19, and a considerable reduction in the time it takes to resolve allegations. These improvements in performance are ensuring a better and more efficient service for the public. PSD has recently established a triage function to improve the service given to members of the public who are dissatisfied with the force. The triage team aim to resolve issues as soon as possible, to the satisfaction of the complainant. The triage team have been in place since January 2019 and has had a significant impact on the number of complaints with a resultant positive impact on demand and an improved service for complainants. Latest figures show the triage team are successfully resolving over 80% of complaints received.

In February 2020 legislative changes brought significant changes to the police complaints and discipline system. As a consequence my office has taken on responsibility for carrying out complaint appeals that were previously referred to the force and in the first 9 months I received 59 cases for review. I welcome these national reforms and see this as a real opportunity to increase independence and improve public confidence in the police complaints

system. The changes reinforce and further develop my role in holding the local police force to account on behalf of our local communities.

I am pleased that West Mercia Police has retained its status on HMICFRS' Best Use of Stop and Search (BUSS) programme. West Mercia was removed from the BUSS scheme prior to my election, so it is a clear sign of improvement that status has been reinstated and retained in recent years. For example, in 2019/20 36% of all stop searches in West Mercia resulted in positive police action being taken, compared 27% in similar forces. The use of stop and search clearly has the potential to be a contentious issue, so it follows that compliance with its best use is an important point of reassurance to our communities.

Throughout my term, ongoing work (both from my office and the police force) has been independently scrutinised to provide reassurance to our communities. This work has been carried out, previously, by the Trust, Integrity and Ethics and Joint Audit Committees. More recently these functions have been amalgamated into the new West Mercia Audit and Standards Committee. These panels have met in public, with published papers to ensure transparency. I am grateful to the Committee members for their valuable contributions.

Independent Custody Visitors

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. There are currently over 40 ICV volunteers, who carry out their visits at any time of the day or night, seven days a week. ICV inspections focus on prioritising the vulnerability and dignity of detainees, such as mental health issues. They check that appropriate processes are being followed by police including, for example, access to legal representation and appropriate health care, as well as things such as stocks of food and washing facilities for detainees.

A total of 929 visits have been carried between April 2016 and mid-March 2020, clocking in at significantly more than 1,000 hours of total service. At the start of the pandemic, a decision was taken to suspend physical visits to help protect both the safety of the ICVs, detainees and custody staff. Working with the head of custody my scheme coordinator has been able to successfully introduce virtual visits, enabling ICVs to use mobile technology to engage with detainees and continue their work.

ICVs fulfil a crucial role in providing reassurance to communities about how police are handling people under detention. The age range of our ICVs spans from 18 to 88, and I am grateful to all of our volunteers for their invaluable contributions, particularly those with many years of experience and service. I have accompanied ICVs on their visits on numerous occasions and my Deputy attends ICV Panel meetings in order to understand and support their roles and experiences.

I have been committed to the ongoing development of the scheme, ensuring it has both the resources and resilience to be as effective as possible. This has seen the introduction of an

electronic recording system to enable ICVs to submit their visit reports as quickly as possible and promotion of the scheme with students at Worcester University resulting in a number of new younger volunteers. In 2019 the scheme was successful in attaining compliance with the new National Independent Custody Visitors Association Quality Assurance Framework. I have also ensured up to date custody data has been published on my website, in line with HMICFRS best practice.

Independent scrutiny

To support me in my oversight role the Joint Independent Audit and Standards Committee was established to provide independent scrutiny of activities, processes and policies. Following termination of the alliance with Warwickshire Police this committee has recently been reformed to be the West Mercia Audit and Standards Committee, with a focus solely on West Mercia.

The force has been able to improve its approach to its use of stop and search and is now fully compliant with the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme, crime recording standards have increased with the force recently been assessed as *good* and most notably following an *inadequate* grading for its approach to tackling serious and organised crime, the most recent inspection report has judged the force as *good* in this area. I have responded to the Home Secretary with my assessment of the force response to these inspection reports and in doing so have made clear my commitment to support the force in making the necessary improvements to ensure it can provide an efficient and effective service.

Throughout my term it has been important to me that the outcome of key decisions and discussions are made accessible so that our communities can have trust in me as their Commissioner and the police force I hold to account on their behalf. I have achieved this through my Facebook Live events as well as publishing reports notes and minutes from a wide number of governance and scrutiny meetings including the Holding to Account Meetings, the Alliance Governance Meetings while they were held and my Crime Reduction Board and Victims' Board meetings. Additionally the delivery plan I developed outlining how the commitments I have made in my Safer West Mercia Plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis and reported to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, who are responsible for scrutinising my activities and responsibilities.

Community Engagement

As Commissioner I promised to listen and be responsive to feedback from our communities. I have worked hard to deliver on this promise during my term and hope that the results of this engagement are clear to all.

My decisions to increase police officer numbers are perhaps the most obvious and prominent examples of where this has been the case. These decisions were informed by consistent and sustained feedback from the public, who made it clear they wished to see additional police visibility, accessibility and capacity. These views were also reinforced via formal consultation around my budget proposals in 2019/20.

Formal consultation has formed a regular part of my engagement with the community and partners. In the early stages of my term two formal consultations were held in the development of my Safer West Mercia Plan, with a further one around the development of my Victims' Charter. A three month consultation around my fire governance proposals returned support from more than 60% of the 1000+ respondents. My strategies around drugs, serious organised crime, rural crime and road safety have also had formal consultation periods. Most recently in November 2020 I launched my 'Your Voice' consultation seeking to ensure the public's views are at the heart of my decision making in preparation for finalising my budget proposals in a year where the coronavirus pandemic has led to greater uncertainties than usual on public finances and the economy. On top of this, I have also sought community views around my budget proposals each year. For each consultation the full results have been published, including my responses to each comment. This feedback has helped shape and determine my ultimate decisions as Commissioner.

I have developed a new confidence and perceptions survey to reliably gauge local views on policing and crime across the force area. The project sees 3,000 people interviewed each year at random, delivering statistically significant samples for each local policing area (LPA) – Herefordshire, South Worcestershire, North Worcestershire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. The survey captures local views on a range of subjects, including levels of confidence and trust among our communities, as well as officer accessibility and visibility. Overall results have been encouraging so far, with the headline overall confidence figure standing at 87%. The results have enabled me to ensure community views are reliably represented within the police force and highlighted areas of good performance in the force, as well as areas for learning and improvement. These would not have been possible without this project, which has provided an excellent return on investment.

While the confidence and perceptions survey gathers views from the public, I have also initiated an annual perceptions survey for town and parish councils. I believe strongly in the value of these local councils, who are extremely closely connected to the communities they serve. These surveys have been circulated both directly to local clerks, and via the Associations of Local Councils in recent years. Results have been analysed at force, LPA, and individual levels. Again, they have informed my agenda around holding to account, officer visibility, accessibility and capacity, and where applicable I have ensured local issues have been followed up by local policing teams to help improve relationships with local communities. I am grateful to all the Councils who have engaged with this project.

I have sought to actively and continually engage face-to-face with communities throughout my term. I have always been conscious of the scale of the geography of West Mercia and the fact that I have a duty to represent all communities within the force area, along with the unique challenges and issues faced by each one. I have been supported in these engagements by my deputy and my Community Ambassadors. Between us, we have taken part over 2,500 community engagements. These have covered the length and breadth of West Mercia, and included council meetings, visiting young people in schools, meeting different faith groups and organisations, rural communities, local businesses, LGBT groups, BME communities, meeting local MPs, and attending community events.

Despite lockdown restrictions I have sought to maintain as much community engagement as possible. Work with community groups has continued where possible, with the level of communication increasing to reflect the ever-changing landscape. For example, my monthly newsletter changed to fortnightly to ensure timely information continued to be available.

I have worked with partners and used my Community Ambassadors to ensure that the most vulnerable in communities are being supported. I have established a Covid-19 Community fund to support charities and organisations to address concerns around domestic abuse, scams, exploitation of young people and cyber-crime, which are crime types associated with the pandemic. Messages have been issued across social media channels, as well as through local media. I have also been working with partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure key messages are captured and shared from all partners. I have successfully used modern technology to connect with the communities of West Mercia. For example I have developed The 'Safer West Mercia Podcast' series which aims to shine a spotlight on areas of policing and services that provide support to victims of crime, by speaking with those at the heart of it. It is the intention that listeners will not only gain an insight into these areas, but they will also benefit from practical advice.

More recently I have used an online media platform to hold a public event in each of the local policing areas. I am joined on these events by the West Mercia Police We Don't Buy Crime team, the Rural and Business Officer for each areas and a representative from the Road Safety team. Whilst virtual sessions are no substitute for face to face events, they are a great and safe alternative that allow communities to get involved and ask the questions that matter to them most and are a key part of my commitment to ensure community voices are heard.

Prior to the start of the pandemic I held a programme of 20 'Q&A' surgery style events, right across the most rural parts of our force area, engaging directly with people who wished to provide feedback, raise issues, or offer praise to local police. In each case, I have ensured relevant casework and matters arising have been followed up, both by myself and where appropriate the police force too. Each year up until 2020 I have also engaged in a programme of events during the summer. These have been part of some of the biggest and best attended events spread across the force area, such as the Three Counties Show and Shropshire County Show, visiting different communities, and carrying a range of engagement opportunities from burglary prevention to taking part in consultations.

There has been a notable increase in public contact with my office during my term. In 2016 around 350 items of correspondence or casework were logged by the PCC's Office. That figure has now risen to more than 1,300. I am pleased to see more people engaging with my office and me as an individual. I have introduced new contact management systems to ensure all engagement with my office is appropriately logged, triaged and processed. This helps deliver the best possible service to our communities and provides reassurance that no correspondence goes missing or gets overlooked.

Public engagement has also grown significantly on my digital platforms. Shortly after my election I introduced a new PCC website as a more effective and cost-efficient platform to inform communities about my work and take their feedback, and this has recently been

refreshed to enable the public to navigate as well as adhere to accessibility requirements. Typically, within a month, my website has over 3,000 page views. Growth on social media has also been significant. For example, the number of 'likes' on my office Facebook page has quadrupled in the last two years, with reach peaking at 54,000, with many posts achieving around 2,000 a day. I am clear that social media is an engagement platform rather than just for communication and have ensured views and feedback are captured and actioned via these platforms as much as any others. I have also used social media as a means of direct engagement with public 'holding to account' meetings streamed live twice each year. These events have provided platforms for communities to put their questions directly to the Chief Constable about local crime and policing, and more than 9,600 people have engaged with these online meetings thus far.

I have had a number of specific focuses for engagement during my term, in the form of sustained campaigns. My Behind the Badge initiative has sought to reduce attacks against police officers and other emergency service workers. This initiative has seen engagement with the wider community, prisons, MPs and Government Ministers, as a means of successfully lobbying for tougher sentences for those who attack emergency workers. I am grateful to the police officers who have shared their personal stories as part of this campaign, highlighting the dangers that officers face in the line of duty while simply trying to keep us safe, the injuries they have suffered, and the ongoing impact these incidents have had both on them and those closest to them. I believe strongly that emergency workers such as police officers are ordinary people doing extraordinary work and this campaign has proven both extremely valuable in highlighting that, and in reinforcing the strength of public support for the emergency services.

The Home and Dry campaign seeks to prevent deaths and other accidents linked to water. I have been a leading partner along with a host of other agencies including local fire and rescue services, the RNLI, RLSS UK, West Mercia Search and Rescue, local authorities, local colleges and local universities. I am also particularly grateful to Kirsty Walsh and the family of Tom Jones, who have, as part of the campaign, shared their own deeply personal stories of losing loved ones in the river in Shrewsbury and Worcester respectively. Their support and bravery has been incredible in working to prevent other people and families going through similar ordeals in the future. The campaign has grown and evolved significantly since its inception, now involving a much broader range of partners, engaging in a wide range of community engagements. These have ranged from education events as part of university fresher's week through to throw-line demonstrations on the River Severn.

My Roads Focus initiative has been delivered in partnership with both Worcestershire County Council and Shropshire Council as a means of trying to make our roads, and their users, safer. This campaign has focused entirely on engaging with communities in a number of different ways. These have included free driver education sessions, drop-in sessions with multiple road safety partners and training for winter driving. These events have provided vital information to hundreds of people across the two counties and resulted in numerous road safety improvements being delivered, having had issues identified at the events by members of local communities. This specific element around free driver safety awareness sessions has now further expanded right across Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin as well, capturing the entire

force area. These sessions have so far proven popular with local communities, with high levels of attendance at each event. Due to Covid placing restrictions on having these sessions in person, I didn't want to forego them completely and two online sessions were run in November 2020.

Commissioning

While the police undoubtedly have a central role in the prevention and detection of crime it is clear that other agencies, the third and voluntary sectors, and indeed communities can also play vital roles in preventing crime and helping victims cope and recover. In some respects, they will be even more effective than the police in these functions.

In my term as Commissioner I have prioritised additional resources for effective, evidence led community projects. This approach has sought to ensure the best possible returns on investment for our communities and help deliver a safer West Mercia. I have also ensured that the commissioning of services or awarding of grants have followed consistent, transparent processes so that all parties, including our communities, can have faith in how decisions involving public money are being taken. Delivery against agreed criteria has then been closely monitored through the lifespan of a grant or service to ensure achievement of objectives and ultimately the best possible benefits to our communities.

I have also sought to improve the security and longevity of victim service provision by entering into multiple year contracts for several services such as IDVA, Victim Support, ISVA and CSE provision. In addition to this, the introduction of the in-house Victim Advice Line back in 2019 was fundamental in improving victim services, right from their first contact.

In 2020/21 alone I invested more than £6m across over 48 different projects. As outlined throughout this report the investments I have made during my term have been targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and reoffending throughout West Mercia. In 20/21, the total amount of funding allocated to victim services exceeds £3.7m, with £2.2 of that being provided through an MoJ grant.

I have developed new approaches to increase collaboration and jointly commission services with partners across the West Mercia force area and beyond. I have consistently supported Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across the force area, ensuring that in West Mercia we have a localised approach to community safety, with resources focused where they are needed to address the most pressing priorities in each local area. I have also made significant investments into CCTV, roads safety and also enabled communities to take the lead through my investment in the 'We Don't Buy Crime' initiative, which has played a key role in reducing burglaries across West Mercia.

My Safer West Mercia Plan has set the overarching framework for local commissioning. This has been complemented by my Commissioning Strategy below it, which has laid out a very clear process for deciding how to use the resources available to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, and sustainable way, responding to local needs. My commissioning team have used 'Understand, Plan, Do, Review' which is a continuous cycle of action and improvement detailed below:

Understand

- A clear evidence base (through needs assessments, engagement with the public, potential service users and partners) must be established to introduce a new or continue an existing service. To include a clear understanding of the outcomes to be achieved and the existing service provision, ensuring a new service does not duplicate effort.
- The strategic direction of key partners is taken into account.
- Map out any co-dependencies. This could include referring agencies or other specialist support provision to provide seamless pathways.
- Consideration is given to pooled budget arrangements to ensure a more joined up service provision and deliver economies of scale.

Plan

- Services must be accessible across West Mercia unless the service being funded is developing a proof of concept (pilot)
- Co-commissioning is desirable this can enable more comprehensive service provision and reduce the burden on providers of multiple outcome reporting arrangements. This will be done within the region or across boundaries where it will benefit service users.
- Co-design and engagement with service users, providers and partners is key to the process.
- Outcome measures must be set to ensure that the service provider is demonstrating they are meeting the identified need.

Do

- Proportionate methodology will be used within the confines of the Financial Regulations including three quotes and competitive tendering.
- All tenders will be posted on the national Blue light E-Tendering site. The funding envelope and quality v cost split will be transparent.
- Market Engagement days will be held, where appropriate, to add value or where the value of the contract hits the OJEU (Official Journal of European Union) threshold which requires all public sector tenders to be published.
- Multi agency evaluation of tenders will ensure a broad range of views and knowledge of co-dependent services are considered. Service users will be invited to engage in the process where possible.

- Contracts will be awarded with a range of timeframes depending on the security of the funding stream (although break clauses for both parties will always be included)

Review

- The Safer West Mercia Plan sets out the overall performance framework.
- Contract management ensures performance reporting obligations are appropriate and provides reassurance that all funding is delivering the agreed outcomes.
- Outcome reporting forms are required to be completed by all service providers on a regular basis. These demonstrate the activity undertaken (service provision), the outputs generated (quantitative data such as referral numbers) and the impact they have had on the service user (outcomes).
- Grant visits (to include service user feedback) are conducted during the life of the contract.
- De-commissioning - where services are shown not to be meeting their outcomes support is offered. However, in some cases, where it is not viable to continue, a service will be de-commissioned

Key principles for commissioning activity

All commissioning activity will adhere to the following principles

Transparency

- Services must show clear links to the objectives in the Safer West Mercia Plan 2016-2021.
- Details of all commissioning activity will be published on the PCC's website.

Integrity

- We will encourage applications focused on prevention and early intervention for victims and offenders.
- We will work with partners to develop and stabilise the market place.

Legitimacy

- We will commission victim services in line with the requirements in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- We will comply with the EU Victims' Directive 2012/29 regarding minimum standards on the rights of victims of crime and their family members.
- When commissioning victim services, we will ensure that services comply with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims (2015)
- Providers will be encouraged to demonstrate where their services can add social value, and this will form part of the assessment process in line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

Accountability

- All investment will be assessed against a prearranged weighting criteria which accounts for both the quality of positive outcomes proposed and the cost.
- Our focus will be on the delivery of positive outcomes as opposed to funding activity. Recipients will need to demonstrate the difference our funding has made within clearly defined measures.

Strategic & Financial Control

- Where possible, we will invest in services to assist in drawing down additional external funding, sustaining activity or increasing scope and capacity. We will therefore support applications seeking match funding.
- We will enhance service provision by applying, in partnership, to new funding streams.

Support

- We will work in partnership with other stakeholders to explore co-commission opportunities which achieve economies of scale and avoid the possibility of duplication.
- Provision will be required to have seamless pathways into other linked services to ensure a holistic approach in supporting people with complex needs.
- Where applicable, services will be commissioned West Mercia wide to ensure equitable access to provision.
- Innovation will be supported where an existing or emerging evidence base can be shown.
- Service specifications will include flexibility to adapt to future changes in need and demand.

Scrutinise

- Proposals will be cross checked with needs assessments to ensure funding is being channelled to the areas of greatest need and impact.
- Value for money will also involve a combined assessment of need and impact and will not be assessed purely on the cheapest offer.
- The monitoring process will be proportionate to the value of the service and within the acceptable tolerance of internal audit and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) scrutiny

Audit Trail

- Grant or contract management requirements will be made clear to the service provider in the contract documents.
- Well established procurement processes will be implemented, with realistic timescales for delivery and transition.

Public Voice

- The views of service users will be listened to at all stages of the commissioning cycle.
- Support services will be service user focused and co-designed with the individual from the outset, tailored to meet their needs.

We will endeavour to influence the commissioning of co-dependant services to ensure they adhere to the above principles.

Finance and Resources

Through my term I have overseen significant, sustainable increases in policing budgets in West Mercia, balanced against the lowest council tax increases in England and prudent use of reserves.

The budget I inherited upon my election in 2016 for policing in West Mercia was £207.5m. By 2020/21 that had increased to £235.8m and I have a draft budget proposal for 2021/22 which would see a further increase to £244.4m. This would be an 18% increase over 5 years. This was

made possible through increased funding from central Government, along with increases in council tax.

I promised our communities I would ensure their money was being used efficiently before asking for any more. I have delivered on that promise. In each of my first three years in office I delivered the lowest council tax increases of any policing area in England. The most significant increase in taxation in 2019/20 went directly into funding an additional 115 officers for our police force, with other inflationary costs absorbed into the force's existing budget.

In 2016, the police force spending I inherited was not sustainable and lived well beyond its means each year. I have worked to arrest and address this through the course of my term. Through ongoing reforms and sustainable investment the force moved to produce a balanced budget in 2020/21 and has done so again for the proposed 2021/22 budget. By instilling a culture of careful financial management and governance in the last four years, the force has moved to live within the recurring funding resources available, and reduced its use of reserves. Ensuring that services are providing value for money allows any savings to be reinvested in those services that the public has identified as being a priority for policing in West Mercia.

The prudent use of reserves has been a key element of budgetary management throughout my term. When elected, West Mercia carried a reserve of over £50m. While West Mercia clearly requires healthy operating reserves, I strongly believe that communities contribute their money to use on local policing, rather than for quite so much of it to sit gathering dust. I have therefore utilised reserves as part of capital investments and the programme to modernise the force and make it more effective and efficient and also mitigate against budget reductions. This will continue to be the case. West Mercia's reserves are projected to reduce to £12m by the end of my term of office, more closely in line with accepted national best practice, but still above recommended minimum levels to protect West Mercia's economic security and viability. Healthy reserves also ensure a solid financial footing on which I have built a new more responsive, effective and efficient police force following the end of the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire.

To ensure the force remains both effective and efficient, it is undergoing significant transformation, much of which is reliant on capital investment. The last four years has seen investment in Property, Plant and equipment of £58.4m with a further £17.0m planned by the end of my term of office. This includes investment in the Estate that I am responsible for including

- modernisation of Telford and Worcester Police Stations
- the co-location of Probation Services at Worcester and the Hereford and Worcester Fire Services at Hindlip
- the purchase of a site at Hereford for a new joint Police and Fire Station
- works undertaken on Hindlip HQ site
- construction of a new Command and Control Centre at Hindlip to deliver state of the art emergency response services
- Improvements to Forensic Services and the offices at Hindlip

- Refurbishment of the welfare facilities in the staff accommodation building and the worship facilities in the church
- Refurbishment of the dog training school to ensure facilities are fit for purpose
- improvements for Kidderminster and Worcester police stations
- modernisation of Droitwich, Evesham Police and Shrewsbury stations with refurbishment of office and patrol areas and in Shrewsbury improvements to staff welfare facilities

I have also invested £25.6m in West Mercia's ICT systems to streamline and update technology to ensure the force is capable of meeting the needs of 21st century policing. This includes investment in mobile working, the systems for improved incident management, more effective contact with the public, the upgrades of data networks, improved telephony systems, the replacement of equipment for the Airwave Emergency Services network and the upgrade of the automatic number plate recognition system.

Continued investment in estate and infrastructure are vital to ensure that services delivered to the public continue to be fit for purposes. In recognition of this I have proposed a significant level of investment of £93.8m over the period 2021/22 – 2024/25.

Alongside the oversight of the activities of the West Mercia force and directing priorities for the policing in this area, I use my powers to undertake commissioning activities with the aim to deliver preventative initiatives to reduce crime and causes of crime, as well as supporting victims and challenging perpetrator behaviour. In total I will deliver a total investment of £23.475m during my term of office. Delivering early intervention and prevention schemes as well as victim support services, all of which are designed to support and reassure communities across West Mercia, ultimately keeping them safe. Recently alongside the £1.57m investment in CCTV already outlined, other key financial commitments have included £0.935m on road safety, £0.601m annual commitment to a new diversionary network scheme for young people and £0.250 annual commitment towards the We Don't Buy Crime initiative.

The COVID19 pandemic has had a significant impact on policing West Mercia in the last 12 months. We have dealt with operational challenges of responding to significant social change as well as legislative change. There has also been organisational challenges of providing Personal Protective Equipment to front line officers and enabling the workforce to work remotely. The government has provided additional funding of £446k to contribute to the cost of the pandemic to the organisation. They are reimbursing the cost of purchasing PPE equipment and also introduced a scheme to reimburse 75% of lost income during the pandemic. We have worked very hard during the pandemic to meet the challenges whilst maintaining financial control. The government has also provided an additional £1.5m of funding from the Home office and Ministry of Justice to ensure vital service, particularly on domestic abuse and sexual violence, are available to the victims during this challenging time.

In spite of the progress made, there remains a number of financial challenges in the medium term, with West Mercia facing the challenge of increasing demand and the changing nature of crime. I have delivered the additional 215 officers previously referenced, and have welcomed funding for a further 93 officers allocated to West Mercia in 2021/22. This is via the first round of the Government's commitment to increase officer numbers by 20,000 in England and Wales.

To meet the challenges of managing cost and demand I will as always work closely with Chief Constable to improve our police services, towards delivering a more responsive and effective service which meets the needs of the communities of West Mercia. There are plans in place to deliver a savings target of £12.5m between the periods of 2021/22 to 2024/25 to ensure we operate within the resources that are available to meet these commitments. The work the Force is doing to reform will create a Safer West Mercia, which is able to meet the challenges ahead