

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee held at 10.30 am on
Monday, 12 March 2018

Present:

Members: Councillor R Brown (Chair)
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor R Bailey (substitute for Cllr Andrews)
Councillor J Clifford (Deputy Chair)
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor R Singh

Other Members: Councillors P Akhtar, L Kelly, J Mutton and C Thomas

Employees (by Directorate):

V Castree, Place Directorate
L Gaulton, People Directorate
C Hickin, People Directorate
L Knight, Place Directorate
L Nagle, People Directorate
H Parker, People Directorate
A West, Place Directorate

Other representative: Chief Superintendent Mike O'Hara, West Midlands Police

Apologies: Councillor A Andrews and A Khan (Cabinet Member)

Public Business

60. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

61. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24th January, 2018 were signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

62. WMP 2020 - West Midlands Police Transformation Programme

The Committee received a presentation from Chief Superintendent Mike O'Hara, West Midlands Police concerning WMP2020 (West Midlands Police Transformation Programme) with particular reference to the current situation in Coventry. The presentation aimed to answer four questions posed by the Chair, Councillor Brown. Councillor Kelly, Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner and Member of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board and Councillor P Akhtar,

Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities attended the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The presentation referred to the recent challenges for West Midlands Police: the significant funding reduction; increasing challenges from terrorism, cyber crime and hidden crimes; approximately 3,000 fewer people in WMP; and the increasing use of digital tools. The strategic drivers for change resulting in WMP2020 were highlighted.

The Committee were informed that WMP2020 was an intensive four year change programme that would change the face of policing across the West Midlands. It was designed to help the Police stay one step ahead of criminals enabling the force to be fit for future challenges. Projects included the introduction of body worn video; digital experience for citizens (online incident reporting and tracking); data driven insight; and intelligence. Changes to the working arrangements for the Response Team and the Investigations Team were highlighted along with the aims for Neighbourhood Policing.

The Committee were provided with detailed information on the Coventry workforce, with particular reference to the neighbouring policing establishment, strength and deployable numbers. The numbers of sergeants, police constables and police community support officers assigned to the individual wards were highlighted. There had been a 5% reduction in this establishment between 2013 and 2018.

The presentation provided detailed statistics on recorded crime in the city which showed a recent significant rise in residential burglary. A comparison with other West Midlands areas was provided which highlighted the scale of the problem. The figures for violent offences showed a relatively stable position, while the figures for robbery showed a further significant increase for the city. The statistics concluded with the local and the comparison figures for total recorded crimes with Coventry showing an 11.8% increase on the previous year, the increase being driven by burglary and vehicle crime. Additional information was also provided on the increasing numbers of calls being made to the service.

Chief Superintendent O'Hara informed the Committee of his priorities indicating that robbery was his number one priority, with the volume of burglary offences also remaining a concern. Also the current average of 61 offences per day across Coventry was a position which needed to be improved. He set out how these challenges were to be tackled.

The presentation concluded with the support that could be provided to the police by local communities and the six year programme for the estate which would see the closure of three police bases in the city.

Members raised a number of issues arising from the presentation and responses were provided, matters raised included:

- Clarification about the workforce figures including the reasons and funding for vacant posts
- A detailed explanation about the settings of the bands for the crime statistics

- How an increase in crime statistics was not always bad news, since increased reporting could be the cause, particularly for domestic violence
- The frequency of the use of the crime statistics
- Further information about the urban street gangs in the city
- A concern that calls to the service were being ignored
- Whether the rise in burglaries and robberies was due to the reduced police presence on the street, including details of the staffing situation in St Michaels Ward
- The different approaches being used to target silent crime
- Additional information on emergency and non-emergency call handling response times
- The monitoring of vacancies and sickness etc
- Areas of work which the police shouldn't be involved with
- Details about Street Weekends and how additional support could be provided
- Details of an e-mail sent from a constituent informing of teams of young men harassing young women in the vicinity of the Sky Dome and how could the Council work with the police to stop this behaviour and other City Centre problems
- Information on Pub Watch and the preparation works for the City of Culture 2021 to ensure that visitors felt safe when in Coventry
- The opportunities to improve lighting levels in areas where problems were occurring
- The importance of providing vulnerable residents with a visit following a crime rather than expecting them to report a crime on-line
- An acknowledgement of the importance of reporting all low level crime to be able to build up the bigger picture
- The effectiveness of the current Public Space Protection Orders
- Any proposals for recruit special constables in Coventry
- Information about the austerity cuts to the West Midlands Police budget compared to other areas of the country
- The implications for Police Officers of the reduction of 1,000 back office jobs across the West Midlands area
- Further details about the reasoning for closing three police bases in the city including Willenhall (Coventry South).

RESOLVED that the content of the presentation concerning WMP2020, with particular reference to the current situation in Coventry, and the issues raised by members be noted.

63. **Police, Crime and Community Safety Action Plan**

Further to Minute 62 above, the Board considered the Police, Crime and Community Safety Action Plan. At their meeting on 18th October, the Committee had previously received a presentation on the key areas being targeted as part of the Police, Crime and Safety Plan and had requested additional information on how the aims were going to be achieved. (Minute 27/17 refers). Chief Superintendent Mike O'Hara, West Midlands Police, Councillor Kelly, Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner and Member of the Strategic Policing and Crime

Board and Councillor P Akhtar, Deputy Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities attended the meeting for the consideration of this item.

The Action Plan set out actions to be carried out in the following areas and included Sub-Group responsibility, the responsible officer and the required timescale for each action:

- Anti-Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime
- Connect Build and Engage with Our Communities
- Reoffending and Reduction of Harm
- Drugs and Substance Misuse
- Domestic Violence and Abuse
- Hidden Harm and Vulnerable Victims
- Tackling National and International Threats (Counter Terrorism).

Each of the key topic areas was allocated to a board that would oversee this aspect/area. The plan had a RAG rating to demonstrate how progress was being made towards the target/aim. The Police and Crime Board was the forum where the areas and targets would be monitored.

The Committee were informed that the plan was being implemented with some initial actions having already been completed. The Police and Crime Board was to commence monitoring the plan and key staff or Board Members would be required to answer as to what was being done when progress was deemed unsatisfactory.

RESOLVED that the details contained in the Police, Crime and Community Safety Action Plan be noted.

64. Annual Report of the Work of Outside Bodies - West Midlands Combined Authority - Committees

The Committee considered a report of Councillor George Duggins, Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership, concerning on the work of the elected members appointed to three of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Committees over the preceding twelve months and detailed their attendance at meetings. Councillor John Mutton, the Council's representative on the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, attended the meeting and gave a summary of the Scrutiny Committee's year.

The report set out the key priorities for the WMCA and informed of the three commissions which had been established to progress these priorities. Reference was made to the Strategic Economic Plan, which aimed to improve the quality of life for everyone in the West Midlands. The eight priority actions for the Plan were set out.

RESOLVED that the appointments to the WMCA Board and Committees continue to be made to the organisation in line with the legislative requirements.

65. Annual Report on the Work of Outside Bodies - Voluntary Action Coventry

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Christine Thomas, one of the Council's two representatives on the Voluntary Action Coventry Board (VAC),

which detailed the work of VAC over the preceding twelve months; set out the benefits to the Council of the Council's appointments; provided information on the attendance records for the appointments; and referred to the grant provided by the Council to the organisation. Councillor Thomas attended the meeting and spoke in support of the report. Additional background information on the work of VAC was tabled at the meeting.

The report highlighted that the Council's grant aid agreement with VAC was due to end in March 2018. At the Cabinet Member for Community Development meeting on 10th January, 2018 approval was given for a one year trial of a new grant scheme to provide small amounts of funding for community based organisations to aid them to become financially viable. Representation from the City Council was discussed at the February VAC Management Board meeting and Councillors and officers won't be required to attend from 1st April, 2018, although the Board indicated that Councillors would be welcome to do so in an individual capacity.

RESOLVED that it be recommended that the Council does not appoint representatives to the Voluntary Action Coventry Board after the grant aid agreement ends at 31st March, 2018.

66. **Annual Report on the Work of Outside Bodies - Whitefriars Housing Group**

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Ram Lakha, one of the Council's four representatives on the Whitefriars Housing Board, which detailed the work of Whitefriars Housing over the preceding twelve months; set out the benefits to the Council of the Council's appointments; and provided information on the attendance records and remuneration for the appointments.

A question was raised concerning the current position relating to government proposals to reduce local authority appointments to Housing Associations including the loss of voting rights in return for wiping out Housing Stock Transfer debt and it was agreed that officers would investigate.

RESOLVED that it be recommended that the Council continue to appoint representatives as Directors of the Board of Whitefriars Housing Group.

67. **Outstanding Issues**

The Committee noted that all outstanding issues were included in the Committee's Work Programme.

68. **Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2017/2018**

The Committee considered their Work Programme for the current municipal year.

RESOLVED that:

(1) The Work Programme be noted.

(2) Officers be requested to ensure that future reports/ presentations are circulated in advance of meetings providing members with the necessary preparation time.

69. **Any Other Items of Public Business**

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.40 pm)