

STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

29 NOVEMBER 2022

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(HYBRID MEETING)

MINUTES

Present: Councillor W Qais (Chairman); Councillors A Burrow (substitute), M Carthew, B Donnelly, A Feeney, B Groom, J O'Nyons, S Sheshabhattar and Mrs G Sleigh.

Apologies:

Councillor P Hogarth MBE.

Report authors/witnesses in attendance:

Mrs Alison McGrory - (Solihull MBC - Assistant Director Communities & Partnerships) and Key Priority Lead for Hate Crime.

Gillian Crabbe - (Solihull MBC - Community Safety & Partnerships Lead).

Caroline Murray - (Solihull MBC - Senior Commissioning Manager for Domestic Abuse, Sexual Health & Sexual Abuse).

External Witnesses in attendance:

Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell* - (West Midlands Police – former Solihull NPU Commander and former Key Priority Lead for Violence with Injury to under 25's). [* post meeting note - now Head of Force Contact and succeeded by Chief Superintendent Andy Beard].

Superintendent Richard Harris - (West Midlands Police - Solihull NPU and Youth Offending Lead).

Diane Rhoden - (Director of Nursing – Quality & Safeguarding - NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB and Key Priority Lead for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)).

Fiona Hughes - (Solihull Community Housing, Chief Executive and Key Priority Lead for ASB).

Carol Trappett - (Solihull Community Housing, Head of Housing & Neighbourhoods).

Neil Appleby - (Head of Probation, Solihull and North & East Birmingham and Reducing Reoffending Lead).

Cabinet Members in attendance by invitation:

Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

Other Elected Members in attendance by invitation:

None.

1. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Councillor A Feeney highlighted that he was the Council's West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Member representative and an employee of HM Prison Service. Councillor Feeney remained in the meeting for its entirety and participated in all ensuing discussions.

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2. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS

There were no questions or deputations.

3. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (CSP) KEY PRIORITY UPDATE

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell (West Midlands Police); Superintendent Richard Harris (West Midlands Police); Diane Rhoden (NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB); Fiona Hughes (Solihull Community Housing); Carol Trappett (Solihull Community Housing); Neil Appleby (Probation Service); Mrs Alison McGrory (Solihull MBC); Gillian Crabbe (Solihull MBC); Caroline Murray (Solihull MBC); and Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

The Board considered a number of progress updates from the Safer Solihull Community Safety Partnership (SSP) in regard to their detailed project action plans to tackle the Partnerships four key 2022/23 priorities:

1. Violence Under-25: Key Priority Lead – West Midlands Police.
2. Violence Against Women & Girls: Key Priority Lead – Birmingham & Solihull ICB.
3. Anti-Social Behaviour: Key Priority Lead – Solihull Community Housing.
4. Hate Crime: Key Priority Lead – Solihull MBC.

The introductory report and each project action plan were taken as read and the Board proceeded to ask the following questions and make the following observations:

- Cllr A Burrow welcomed the report and its positive outlook. In doing so, Cllr Burrow referenced the emerging town centre re-developments within the Borough (e.g., Kingshurst) and asked what measures were in place to reduce and design-out crime and ASB from the onset. Officers confirmed that design considerations such as those were built into the planning stages of any new development/re-development. Cllr Burrow also asked what initiatives were in place to target litter, graffiti and general overgrowth of vegetation to lift the appearance of local areas and make them pleasant living spaces for residents. Officers advised that those examples fell into the category of “business as usual” and anything on Council owned land was normally dealt with quickly. For issues associated with privately owned land, such as overhanging branches near to footways, the Council would normally liaise with the property/landowners to negotiate a resolution. Finally, Cllr Burrow raised concerns regarding the use of nitrous oxide gas (specifically from small, pressurised metal containers) and their perceived contribution to ASB and other addictions. Officers advised that local public health colleagues were working with colleagues from across the West Midlands to develop a strategy to tackle the use of nitrous oxide canisters. West Midlands Police also highlighted their DOCO initiative (Design-Out Crime Officers) who were skilled in crime prevention and would engage at the planning stages of any new development/re-development to give advice on what was the most secure means of layout and design. With regard to overhanging vegetation in poorly lit areas such as alleyways and the perception of becoming crime hotspots, West Midlands Police highlighted that very few robbery offences took place in those locations, more so open areas and parks. Finally, the use of nitrous oxide was an emerging issue for West Midlands Police. Whilst it was not currently illegal to possess nitrous oxide, it was an offence to sell it to under 18’s and there was an opportunity to work with local trading standards to tackle under-age sales of that gas.
- Cllr D Howell thanked the Board for their review of the Partnerships key priorities. In respect of the use of nitrous oxide gas canisters, Cllr Howell highlighted that this was a growing problem and that the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health was considering the issue with the Director of Public Health because of the increasing evidence of the physical and mental health ill-effects of its use.

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- Cllr Mrs G Sleigh highlighted the Safer Streets campaign posters (to support victims and communities affected by VAWG) across Solihull Train Station and local bus shelters and asked if all train stations within the Borough were included within that initiative. Diane Rhoden undertook to confirm the extent of the campaign and Members would be advised accordingly.
- Cllr A Feeney referenced the Reducing Youth Violence project plan and welcomed the intentions to listen to and influence young people. Cllr Feeney asked what work was being done to understand the drivers that pushed young people towards committing violent crime and what intervention plans were in place. In response, West Midlands Police highlighted the strategic intentions of the delivery plan and a number of early help interventions which included vulnerability tracking and work around a communications plan to help link with young people who may be at risk of a violent, criminal or gang lifestyle. Cllr Feeney also emphasised the importance of early engagement with schools and parents to support this work.
- Cllr Mrs G Sleigh noted that violence against women and girls was under-reported and asked what work was being done to encourage victims to come forward. Diane Rhoden highlighted initiatives such as the World Café days as an example of ongoing community engagement and other ongoing work with the Solihull Safeguarding Childrens Partnership and the Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to increase awareness, promote zero tolerance and encourage reporting. Members were advised that the most recent data-card did show an increase in reporting which was welcomed.
- Cllr B Groom welcomed the Partnerships updates and the ongoing progress of the work highlighted in the delivery plans. Cllr Groom asked for the level of assurance around the initiatives highlighted as RAG status “amber” and did anything need to be strengthened to ensure the delivery of those initiatives within the delivery plan period. Officers advised that work had now been ongoing for over 12 months and at least two of the Partnerships priorities was now very much considered “business as usual” (particularly Hate Crime and ASB). In terms of the Safer Solihull Partnership going forwards, resources would need to be managed to ensure effective Partnership work was still achievable and targeted Partnership work continued to focus in the most needed areas. Cllr Groom also asked if all that work was still considered achievable given the additional budget pressures the Council was now facing. Officers advised that there were no plans to reduce Council staffing resources for community safety. That agenda did, however, require a Partnership response and there was no guarantee at this stage that all Partners would be able to maintain their current levels of commitment. West Midlands Police added that the delivery plans were ambitious and not all objectives would be met quickly as some objectives needed cultural and behavioural changes in society that would take effort and time. Finally, Cllr Groom asked what improvements had been made to data capture and analysis, particularly within the Police, and was advised that West Midlands Police had invested heavily in their data analysis which now allowed predictive analytics to better understand future trends and the sharing of data with other Partners such as Health and SCH.
- Cllr S Sheshabhatte asked if the current approach was working sufficiently to address the levels of crime within Solihull, if the Partnership had enough resources, and if means of reporting were working effectively. West Midlands Police highlighted that unprecedented levels of demand were currently being seen for 999, 101 and webchat. Currently, 75% of incoming demand to Force Contact did not result in anything that required police attendance or attention. The Board was advised of several work-streams ongoing to provide extra resourcing, better processes and systems, better understanding of incoming data and matching resources to demand profiles such as expected seasonal demands and ad-hoc peaks in certain crime types. Cllr Sheshabhatte also highlighted ASB which had been a cause of concern in

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the north of the Borough and asked what strategies were in place to tackle that. SCH advised that the ASB action plan was led via SCH and several well-established initiatives were in progress, supported by their own call centre and dedicated ASB officers. SCH reported that they had seen an overall decrease in ASB which was to be welcomed although it was highlighted that it was predominantly a responsive service and the quality and timeliness of that cross-tenure service was seen as key.

- Cllr M Carthew also referenced the Reducing Youth Violence project plan and the progress towards the intentions to listen to and influence young people. West Midlands Police confirmed that this area had presented some challenges around communication and work was ongoing to strengthen this area, which included the newly established Early Help Teams and proactive interventions with schools.
- Cllr S Sheshabhattar also highlighted graffiti as an issue of concern and the challenges posed in its reporting, dependant on the ownership of either land or apparatus. Officers advised that in the first instance, graffiti reporting should be directed towards the Council; the challenge then being the follow-up action required in some instances of private/utility company ownership. Cllr Sheshabhattar suggested that the methods of reporting graffiti should be easy for the public and officers undertook to raise this with the Council's Customer Services Team Manager to see what improvements could be made to the information given out at that point of contact.
- Cllr W Qais highlighted that domestic abuse affected both males and females and asked what work was being done around awareness raising. Officers advised that all campaigns were targeted from a gender perspective. Statistically, women were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse, however, it was recognised that there were also male victims and support services were in place for both genders.
- Cllr S Sheshabhattar highlighted that there had been a perceived increase in bike thefts and asked what work was being done to deter, tackle and raise awareness. West Midlands Police noted that, from their data, an increase in cycle theft reporting was not apparent (albeit there could be an element of under reporting). The Board was advised of general work undertaken by the Police to advise the public on crime prevention, although there had not been a specific recent initiative on cycle security. West Midlands Police undertook to set up a future community event and would make this request to their appropriate team.
- Cllr W Qais highlighted the female taxi driver initiative within the aims for safer public transport and asked for further detail on this. Officers advised that the Violence Reduction Partnership was leading on this piece of work at a regional level. If they had not already started, several female taxi drivers would now be working within the Borough.
- Cllr D Howell emphasised the importance of all Partners working together and thanked the Board for their consideration of the report and feedback. Cllr Howell also highlighted other opportunities for Member engagement with Partners through their invitations to "Localities" meetings where issues were discussed on a place-based basis.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership and the Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure):

- (i) That, the Board notes and welcomes the current progress towards the Safer Solihull Partnership's 4 Key Priorities,

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emphasising the importance of preventative Partnership working;

- (ii) That, the Safer Solihull Partnership provide further details (outside of the meeting) to confirm the geographical extent of the Safer Streets Campaign;
- (iii) That, the Safer Solihull Partnership be invited to pursue further initiatives with police and health colleagues to tackle the use of nitrous oxide gas canisters and, where necessary, pursue joint work with Trading Standards to deter under-age sales;
- (iv) That, the Council be invited to review (and refine where appropriate) the customer contact information available to the public in relation to the reporting of graffiti in the first instance; and
- (v) That, West Midlands Police be invited to include bicycle crime prevention as part of their regular neighbourhood crime prevention events.

4. REDUCING REOFFENDING UPDATE

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell (West Midlands Police); Superintendent Richard Harris (West Midlands Police); Diane Rhoden (NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB); Neil Appleby (Probation Service); Mrs Alison McGrory (Solihull MBC); Gillian Crabbe (Solihull MBC); Caroline Murray (Solihull MBC); and Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

The Board considered a detailed report setting out the current strategic approach within Solihull to reduce adult reoffending and how the Safer Solihull Partnership was delivering its statutory responsibility under the Policing and Crime Act 2009.

Having considered the written report, delivery plan and introductory presentation by Neil Appleby, the Board asked the following questions and made the following observations:

- Cllr J O'Nyons highlighted the Reoffending Delivery Plan and asked for further detail on what work was being done around family-based interventions. Cllr O'Nyons also asked for further detail on the local use of unpaid community service work. Neil Appleby advised that the delivery plan was still developing around family ties. One recent piece of work had been commenced and was looking at the children of prisoners and how the Partnership could better serve the needs of those children. In terms of community payback, the Board was advised that unpaid work still remained a significant element of community sentences. Mr Appleby advised that community payback could be better promoted in Solihull to raise its profile.
- Cllr A Feeney asked how the Partnership and Probation Service liaised with prisons. Neil Appleby explained how local and national liaison was undertaken with key activities being triggered typically between 7 and 10 months prior to release; working with a variety of agencies. It was acknowledged that there were improvements that could be made to liaison and further work was ongoing to identify and implement improvements. Cllr Feeney highlighted the importance of the key worker programme within prisons who would normally be assigned to prisoners, noting the resourcing challenges that were evident. Drug and alcohol recovery was also discussed, and the Board asked what linkages were in place to continue that support once a prisoner was released. Mr Appleby explained that there was a target to engage with 70% of prisoners upon release and offer ongoing community treatment. The number of actual individuals was circa 25 to 30% and this was seen as a challenge. Several

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health and justice coordinators had now been employed at local level to strengthen the links between prison and community healthcare. Cllr Feeney also highlighted that when prisoners were released and resettled into new communities, key support linkages could be delayed or lost. The Partnership were asked what was being done to prevent this scenario and was advised that, within Solihull, there was a relatively low level of accommodation that was suitable for the needs of released offenders. Displaced released offenders, where necessary, would be accommodated geographically nearby within Birmingham. One of the most significant priorities going forward was to ensure that “supported accommodation” offered the correct levels of support for a released offenders needs.

- Cllr B Donnelly highlighted the challenges around reoffending and falling back into a criminal or dependant lifestyle with drug and alcohol perceived to be the main drivers. Cllr Donnelly also highlighted that delayed access to services, post-release, was also of concern and multi occupancy housing might even influence vulnerable individuals returning to drug and alcohol dependencies if support services were hard to access or under resourced. Mr Appleby advised the Board of interventions such as day-rehabilitation which was the main service model being used which worked in parallel with safe and secure accommodation; nothing the challenges and expenses associated with that.
- Cllr A Burrow noted the work undertaken by St. Basils housing charity and asked if that organisation was providing any support and, additionally, how inventive the Partnership had been in working with local charities to resolve some of its challenges regarding temporary housing and enabling employment opportunities. The Board was advised that housing and opportunities for employment were the key bedrocks for rehabilitation, albeit funding challenges were always evident. Mr Appleby explained that one current initiative was to establish an employer offer to support offender rehabilitation and steer individuals into work and away from reoffending.
- Cllr A Feeney asked what work was being undertaken to break the cycle of addiction and help permanently stop individuals using drugs. Neil Appleby explained that individuals generally endured several attempts at recovery before being successful. Challenges around GP registration for released offenders was a key issue in supporting recovery and gaining access to support for addictions and mental health services. It was acknowledged that further work was needed to improve this.
- Cllr W Qais asked how the success of the Reducing Reoffending delivery plan was measured in terms of having a positive impact on the Partnerships key priorities. Neil Appleby explained that future versions of the plan could include more robust datasets around e.g., reoffending, released offender re-settlement accommodation and released offenders in employment tracking.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership and the Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure):

- (i) That, the Board notes and welcomes the current work to reduce reoffending;
- (ii) That, further work be undertaken around family-based interventions to strengthen the delivery plan and ensure, particularly, young families of prisoners are identified and supported as appropriate;

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- (iii) That, the community payback element of community sentences be promoted to raise awareness within Solihull and prompt greater usage of that resource;
- (iv) That, the Partnership consider the highlighted challenges surrounding GP registration for some newly released offenders to ensure they can access support services without delay upon release (i.e. continuity of care issues); and
- (v) That, the delivery plan should incorporate clear performance measures utilising data pertaining to reoffending, released offender resettlement and employment tracking to evidence its overall effectiveness.

5. NEIGHBOURHOOD CRIME UPDATE

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell (West Midlands Police); Superintendent Richard Harris (West Midlands Police); Diane Rhoden (NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB); Neil Appleby (Probation Service); Mrs Alison McGrory (Solihull MBC); Gillian Crabbe (Solihull MBC); Caroline Murray (Solihull MBC); and Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

The Board considered a detailed report setting out the current position in respect of neighbourhood crime (robbery, vehicle crime, house burglary and theft from person) and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on that crime type. The report also set out the Police and Partnership's strategic activity taking place to tackle offenders and prevent offending.

Having considered the written report and introductory presentation by Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell, the Board asked the following questions and made the following observations:

- Cllr M Carthew highlighted crime displacement and cross boundary policing and asked for further details as to how this worked in practice to tackle neighbourhood crime. West Midlands Police advised of the typical offending profiles and work undertaken which included intelligence sharing with colleagues in Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire, together with British Transport Police and the Regional Organised Crime Unit to develop a better understanding of prolific offending. Additional work also included prison de-briefs with known offenders and the active management of released offenders within the community who still presented a risk of reoffending.
- Cllr Mrs G Sleigh asked for further details on the reported neighbourhoods within the Borough with the peak number of offences and asked if there was any information to suggest that those areas had been targeted. West Midlands Police advised that organised crime groups would typically identify certain, higher-value, vehicle types which would then be stolen to order. Other crime patterns were opportunist (i.e., theft from a vehicle to fund substance misuse). The Board noted that the geographical layout of the Borough presented some challenges for policing, particularly within the rural areas. West Midlands Police also advised that they were able to call in additional support when required from motorway and traffic officers to help cover additional ground quickly when necessary.
- Cllr S Sheshabhattar asked what proportion of uniformed neighbourhood policing took the form of foot patrols in comparison with vehicle patrols. West Midlands Police advised that virtually all uniformed officers at the Solihull NPU under the command of the Chief Superintendent would be involved in overt burglary patrols during their tour of duty. At the beginning of each shift, officers would be briefed on visible patrol requirements; some of that being on foot and some of that vehicle based and

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dependant on the operational needs and the type of crime in individual areas. West Midlands Police also highlighted the value of the Street Watch initiative as another visible deterrent.

- Cllr A Feeney highlighted the value of local intelligence in tackling crime and asked what work was done with prisons to share intelligence to prevent reoffending upon release. West Midlands Police advised that the Regional Organised Crime Unit led that responsibility around regional prison intelligence. Cllr Feeney also highlighted neighbourhood policing in general terms and asked, with the known budget challenges looming, would this aspect of policing still have the planned increase in resources and what the neighbourhood policing model might look like under a new Chief Constable for the West Midlands. The Board was advised that, specifically for Solihull, there were 27 neighbourhood police officers of which 6 had been dedicated to the impact areas of Smith's Wood and Chelmsley Wood Town Centre. An Early Help Team had also been established to engage with families at an early stage to prevent crime and other associated issues. School Intervention and Prevention officers were in place to speak to young people and highlight, e.g., the dangers of knife crime, criminal exploitation and gangs. A proactive Neighbourhood Task Force Team was also working to execute arrest warrants and recover stolen property. There had also been an increase in officers within the Force's Response, Firearms, and Investigation teams. The Board was advised that the anticipated vision for the new Chief Constable was to reposition some of the central Force resources to the local NPU's to allow greater operational flexibility. Confirmation of what the new operating model would look like for local NPU policing would emerge in the very near future.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership and the Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure):

- (i) That, the Board notes and welcomes the current work being undertaken by the Police and the Safer Solihull Partnership to tackle neighbourhood crime; and
- (ii) That, the Safer Solihull Partnership, and its individual partners, continue to raise awareness of crime prevention through timely and proactive communication campaigns and events.

6. YOUTH OFFENDING UPDATE

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell (West Midlands Police); Superintendent Richard Harris (West Midlands Police); Diane Rhoden (NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB); Neil Appleby (Probation Service); Mrs Alison McGrory (Solihull MBC); Gillian Crabbe (Solihull MBC); Caroline Murray (Solihull MBC); and Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

The Board considered a detailed report setting out the current position in respect of youth offending. The report also set out the Police and Partnership's strategic activity taking place to tackle and prevent offending.

Having considered the written report and introductory presentation by Superintendent Richard Harris, the Board asked the following questions and made the following observations:

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- Cllr S Sheshabhatte highlighted the value of community engagement, particularly with schools and colleges and asked how the success of such initiatives and interventions were measured. Cllr Sheshabhatte also noted that there were fewer youth clubs now as opposed to previous years and asked if there were any plans to increase that type of provision for young people. West Midlands Police advised that, with regard to youth provision, they were currently in discussion with a number of partners (such as Urban Heard) to try to establish new youth centres subject to funding being identified. In terms of the success of ongoing engagement, the Board was advised that a view would be taken at the end of the performance year to consider how effective those initiatives and interventions had been on a case study basis.
- Cllr A Feeney noted the impact of knife crime on young people and welcomed the use and effectiveness of stop and search. Noting the policing resources allocated to schools and colleges, Cllr Feeney asked if the number of available officers (1 x Sergeant and 10 x PC's) was sufficient to cover all the Borough's schools. West Midlands Police explained how their engagement was undertaken and they highlighted, particularly, how their School Panels were run in the north and south of the Borough which allowed direct contact with numerous school head teachers simultaneously. The Board was also advised of Project Guardian (a Home Office funded project) which utilised data to intensify and focus patrols. West Midlands Police also confirmed that targets to undertake stop and search activities were not set.
- Cllr D Howell highlighted the value of youth work and advised that Urban Heard had been a key partner in setting up the Youth Opportunities Board for Solihull. This was a collection of youth organisations brought together to share learning and work collaboratively to produce more opportunities for youth work across the Borough.
- Cllr M Carthew asked what cross boundary work was done with schools just outside of the Borough boundary and was advised that for his ward as an example, the police would (when required) work closely with colleagues in Birmingham East NPU who would have similar initiatives in place to allow for that cross-over discussion on a need-by-need basis.
- Cllr S Sheshabhatte highlighted the growing trend of video vloggers who filmed police buildings and attempted to engage with officers before publishing their footage online. West Midlands Police advised that they were aware of this trend and all officers had been briefed as to how to respond to those individuals. The Board was also advised of the powers under the Counter Terrorism Act that would allow the police to act appropriately under circumstances that they deemed to be suspicious.
- Cllr W Qais noted that the community played an important role in reducing youth offending and asked if that aspect was working well. West Midlands Police advised that there was always work to be done to make improvements to the initiatives and engage further with the community. For much of the time, the initiatives had a good response from the community although further work around raising awareness would be of benefit. West Midlands Police highlighted that they needed to identify more role models from communities that young people could look up to and be inspired to lead lifestyles away from offending.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership and the Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure):

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- (i) That, the Board notes and welcomes the current work being undertaken by the Police and the Safer Solihull Partnership to tackle youth offending;
- (ii) That, the Safer Solihull Partnership and its individual partners continue to raise awareness and undertake positive community engagement regarding youth offending initiatives through timely and proactive communication campaigns and events; and
- (iii) That, all elected Members assist in identifying role models from their local communities who could become engaged in initiatives to support reductions in youth offending.

7. SERVICE UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF NEW DUTIES BROUGHT INTO EFFECT BY THE DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021

In attendance: Chief Superintendent Ian Parnell (West Midlands Police); Superintendent Richard Harris (West Midlands Police); Diane Rhoden (NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB); Neil Appleby (Probation Service); Mrs Alison McGrory (Solihull MBC); Gillian Crabbe (Solihull MBC); Caroline Murray (Solihull MBC); and Councillor D Howell – Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure).

The Board considered a detailed report setting out the current position on the local approach to domestic abuse; focusing on progress with the delivery of new duties brought into effect by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Having considered the written report, delivery plan and introductory presentation by Caroline Murray, the Board asked the following questions and made the following observations:

- Cllr W Qais welcomed the work undertaken and highlighted the importance of measuring the impact and effectiveness of the new service provision. Officers advised that the delivery plan was informed by key partnership data and would be aligned with a performance scorecard with annual performance reporting being undertaken. External consultants had led on the needs assessment and that work had also strengthened the identification of data and created a more detailed performance scorecard which would be adopted from April 2023. These systems and processes would also help with the identification of trends (and changes to those trends) and measure the impact of service delivery. Officers also highlighted the commissioning of training; its evaluation and impact would also be an important service performance measure going forwards. Cllr Qais also asked for further information on the local Sanctuary Scheme that was to be re-commissioned. Officers advised that a service provider had now been commissioned and regular monitoring would be undertaken to review the number of referrals going forwards, together with opportunities for national learning to better understand the types of local support and interventions needed.
- Cllr S Sheshabhattar highlighted the importance of early identification and prevention. Regarding awareness and healthy relationship work in schools, officers were asked how the effectiveness of those initiatives were monitored. The Board was advised that a mandatory healthy relationship teaching module for schools had been introduced by the Domestic Abuse Act and the effectiveness of that would be evaluated as part of a schools Ofsted inspection.
- Cllr A Feeney also highlighted the importance of work within schools and, particularly, the timely emphasis of appropriate contact between peers as they matured and what was (and not) acceptable behaviours towards each other. Officers were asked if service demand was higher at certain times of the year or during certain events and

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was advised that, typically, the police would anticipate trends although there were many known aggravating factors and potential outcome scenarios to consider.

- Cllr M Carthew asked what support and resources were available to e.g., religious groups and sectors of the community, such as the elderly, that relied on traditional methods of communication and may therefore miss digitally publicised events and initiatives to raise awareness and encourage reporting. Officers advised that several communication resources were now due to be refreshed following the pandemic. For older people, work had been commissioned with the Women's Aid charity to support and train all agencies that were likely to work with the elderly to better understand, identify and trigger an early response where domestic abuse was suspected. Easy-to-read printed documentation to raise awareness and signpost support was also produced for the elderly. The future service model was also moving away from a female/male service to one with a single point of access that recognised all cultures of society, including those individuals with protected characteristics. Cllr Carthew also highlighted the "Ask Annie" campaign and asked for further detail as to its success and duration. Officers advised that several different campaigns had been commissioned and the delivery plan now sought to improve the local delivery of those. Full details of both "Ask Annie" and "Ask Angela" were recapped for the Boards information.
- Cllr B Donnelly sought reassurances that the correct support resources were in place to help individuals that might come forward, especially during the Christmas period and immediately afterwards, the avoid them having to return to the problems they had fled from. Officers advised that, typically, a victim's journey to leave and end an abusive relationship was a difficult one and statistics showed that those individuals considered leaving on average 7 times before doing so. Work was ongoing to strengthen the service so whenever someone disclosed domestic abuse (or indicators highlighted that domestic abuse was likely) to any agency or service, that would trigger conversations with those individuals to highlight the support available to them.
- Cllr D Howell welcomed the progress made in realigning the service to the new statutory duties and thanked officers for the work undertaken to achieve that.

RESOLVED

That, subject to the comments and views recorded in the preamble above, the Board **UNANIMOUSLY** made the following recommendations to the Safer Solihull Partnership and the Cabinet Member (Communities & Leisure):

- (i) That, the Board notes and welcomes the progress made towards the delivery of the new duties brought into effect by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021; and
- (ii) That, the Board considers a further progress update in 12 month's time as part of its 2023/24 (Crime & Disorder) Work Programme.

(The meeting ended at 8.30pm)