

# STRONGER COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES SCRUTINY BOARD

06 NOVEMBER 2018

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### MINUTES EXTRACT

Present: Councillor Mrs D Holl-Allen MBE (Chairman); Councillors J Butler, P Hogarth MBE, T Hodgson, B Holmes, Mrs G Sleigh, M Parker (sub), P Thomas and M Wilson.

Apologies:

Councillor A Mackiewicz.

Report authors/witnesses in attendance:

Alan Brown (Assistant Director – Highways & Environment, Managed Growth and Communities Directorate).

Mrs Alison McGrory (Assistant Director - Stronger Communities, Managed Growth and Communities Directorate).

Caroline Naven (Head of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services), Managed Growth and Communities Directorate).

External Witnesses in attendance:

Chief Inspector Colin Barnes – West Midlands Police.

Cabinet Members in attendance:

None.

Other Elected Members in attendance by invitation:

None.

#### 1. SAFER SOLIHULL PARTNERSHIP QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE UPDATE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2018

In attendance: Mrs Alison McGrory (Assistant Director - Stronger Communities, Managed Growth and Communities Directorate); Caroline Naven (Head of Neighbourhood and Regulatory Services), Managed Growth and Communities Directorate); Chief Inspector Colin Barnes – West Midlands Police.

The Board received the Safer Solihull quarterly performance update covering Quarter 2 – 2018/19. To allow the Board to consider the latest performance appraisal, together with recent Partnership outcomes and interventions, Chief Inspector Colin Barnes delivered a PowerPoint presentation which, in summary, updated the Board and set out that:

- Total recorded crime had increased by 3.2% (284 additional crimes).
- Burglary had increased by 4.6% (45 additional crimes). Vehicle Crime had reduced by 16.8 % (263 fewer crimes). Robbery had reduced by 3.3% (9 fewer crimes) and Public Place Violence had increased by 0.3% overall.
- Year on year comparisons between October 2017 and October 2018 - Total Recorded Crime had increased by 6.1% (84 additional offences), Burglary Dwelling had reduced by 6.6% (13 fewer offences), Robbery had reduced by 20.9% (9 fewer offences) and Vehicle Crime had reduced by 12.0% (29 fewer offences).
- Increases for the same comparison period had also been seen for business crime, sexual offences, bilking and domestic violence.

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- Solihull NPU's immediate priorities were Burglary Residential, Vehicle Crime, Violence and outstanding Domestic Abuse offenders.
- For the Domestic Abuse priority, a concerted effort had been made to reduce the number of outstanding offenders. An eight week focus had resulted in a reduction from 74 to 36 outstanding offenders which was now the lowest NPU figure within the Force area.
- Total Daily Recorded Crime was shown to be broadly within control limits, with very recent reductions being attributed to Operation Intercept.
- ASB was also within control limits for year on year comparisons between October 2017 and October 2018.
- Knife Crime – Solihull NPU had the lowest figure within the Force area for the number of Total Knife Crime Offences, contributing just 4% to the overall Force area total. Recent initiatives for that crime type had also seen notable reductions across the majority of the Force NPU's.
- Recent Partnership activity included new locality working, Operation Intercept, community engagement, WMNow promotion, and Street Watch.
- Multi-Agency Vehicle Exercises (MAVE) had taken place which aimed to drive down crime by targeting offenders, promote road safety, reduce ASB, reduce fear of crime, provide a visible uniformed presence and leave a positive footprint in the areas where the exercises had taken place.
- Immediate future work would include the "Darker Nights" campaign and retail crime operations ahead of the Christmas period. A Neighbourhood Task Force would continue to focus on arresting outstanding offenders, offender management, developing community intelligence and enforcing warrants in relation to drugs and acquisitive crime.

In response to questions arising from the Board's previous meeting, Chief Inspector Barnes also highlighted the following information, prepared by Force colleagues, that related to Force Contact and the 101 Non-Emergency number:

- On average, during the summer this year, the length of time taken to answer 101 calls for service was anything between just under 2 minutes to 16 minutes. Greater counter-terrorism awareness by the public had added additional pressure on Force Contact.
- As a consequence, when members of the public could not get through to 101, there had been a displaced demand that added further pressure on the 999 number.
- The national increase of 15% into the 999 service meant that West Midlands Police had to ring-fence more staff to their 999 call handling.
- West Midlands Police always prioritised 999 calls for service and during the summer, Force Contact was still achieving national standards of answering those calls within 10 seconds.
- To date, 101 call answering service levels had improved and were currently at 3-4 minutes. 101 calls costed 15p per call in their totality, not per minute.
- The number of abandoned 101 calls had reduced significantly and in the last 3 weeks this had reduced by 40%.
- Online reporting was being widely encouraged by West Midlands Police. Typically, contact staff could deal with 4-5 live online chats at one time and response times for that digital portal were about 1 minute. Live chat was serviced between 0800hrs until

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midnight by highly trained staff. All low-level crime could also be reported at <https://west-midlands.police.uk/contact-us>

The Board made the following observations:

- Lengthy call answering times for the 101 Non-Emergency number caused the public to quickly lose confidence in the Police.
- Some Solihull residents were carrying out their own unofficial patrols in their neighbourhood amid rising concerns about crime. Chief Inspector Colin Barnes urged those members of the community to sign up to the official Street Watch initiative which gave volunteers training and insurance. Concerns were expressed that those unofficial patrols placed the volunteers themselves and the public at risk.
- Noting the deployment tactics for demand-led policing, the Board was reassured that NPU teams were always fully staffed in areas of Solihull where there was demand.
- An increase in crime reporting was acknowledged, potentially due to growing trust and public confidence in the Police to report crimes in the first instance.
- Protecting the elderly and vulnerable should always remain a key priority for the Partnership.
- Measures to deter criminality should continue to be promoted by the partnership such as timer-lights, anti-snap locks and other simple crime prevention actions and behaviours that homeowners and households could take.
- Specific operations and initiatives to target and disrupt criminality were proven to be successful. The Board fully supported those approaches. Borderless policing also aided robust offender management.
- Taxi and Private Hire Driver awareness and training in Solihull to identify the signs of CSE was commended. The Board, however, acknowledged the challenges of a high number of divers being licenced by other West Midlands local authorities.
- A perceived lack of engagement from some business for certain crime types was seen as frustrating. The reference to the Shirley BID proposals was also clarified as the report (appraisal for theft from shops and stalls) appeared to indicate that the proposed Shirley BID area had included Sears Retail Park which had not been the case.
- Custody block provision for Solihull NPU, now located out of Borough, was having some impact on Borough policing resources. However, no further operational detail was disclosed at this time.

The Board made the following **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the **Safer Solihull Partnership** and the **Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities and Partnerships**:

- (i) That the Safer Solihull Performance update for Qtr 2 2018/19 be received; and
- (ii) That the recent Partnership interventions and outcomes be noted and endorsed.