



Accountability and Governance Board

Notes of the Meeting

Tuesday 25 February 2025

These meetings provide a summary of key points raised during the meeting.

1	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Claire Bell (Assistant Chief Constable, WMP) Damian Barratt (Assistant Chief Constable, WMP) Jonathan Jardine (Chief Executive, OPCC) Lucy Wilson (Chief Inspector, WMP) Mike O'Hara (Assistant Chief Constable, WMP) Samantha Batey (Superintendent, WMP) Simon Foster (Police and Crime Commissioner, OPCC) Thomas Hadley (Chief Inspector, WMP) Wasim Ali (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, OPCC)</p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>Alethea Fuller (Deputy Chief Executive, OPCC) Craig Guildford (Chief Constable, WMP) Scott Green (Deputy Chief Constable, WMP)</p>
2	<p>Notes of last meeting</p> <p>The notes of the last meeting were approved.</p>
3	<p>PCC Update</p> <p>The Commissioner provided a general update which covered the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">I. The PCC welcomed the publication of new statistics showing the total crime reported across the West Midlands reduced by nearly 8%, with around 30,000 fewer victims of crime. Data from national statistics covers the period of October 2023-September 2024 and shows that West Midlands Police (WMP) is cutting crime; including serious youth violence, which is down by 7%; knife crime down by 5.5%; burglary of a dwelling down by 13%; robbery down by 8%; and vehicle crime down by 10%. This is testament to the hard work of police officers, staff, and partners across the West Midlands. The PCC is committed to constant and unremitting action to hold WMP to account and work with the Chief Constable and other partners to tackle crime, promote community safety and keep people, families, businesses, and local communities safe and secure.II. The PCC is pleased to be investing a record £174,000,000 into policing for the West Midlands, which is the total amount available to invest in the WMP budget for 2025-2026. This will bring the total net-revenue budget for WMP, including the National Police grant, to £790,000,000. The PCC noted the priority to provide WMP with the resources it needs to prevent and tackle crime, promote community safety and keep

	<p>the people of the West Midlands safe and secure. In return, the PCC will be holding WMP to account and working with the Chief Constable.</p> <p>III. The PCC has made more than £100,000 available to organisations across the West Midlands that provide support to victims and survivors of hidden crime. Hidden harmful practices include FGM, honour-based, abuse, forced marriage and human traffic. The funding will make a real difference to people who need it most. The PCC urged organisations who work to prevent and tackle hidden crime to apply as it is important to recognise work that is being carried out.</p> <p>IV. The PCC welcomed the announcement of an extra £100,000,000 funding for neighbourhood policing. This follows an initial £100,000,000 in December. The total £200,000,000 will mean an additional £12,200,000 for the West Midlands. The PCC will be working with the Chief Constable to deliver as many additional police officers for neighbourhood policing as possible. Continuing to rebuild neighbourhood policing is the PCC's top priority and has been since his initial election in 2021. The new Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029 will include a neighbourhood policing guarantee aiming to continue rebuilding neighbourhood policing.</p> <p>V. £30,000 has been made available to community groups to make a difference around the West Midlands. The PCC will allocate £5,000 to local groups and organisations to reduce crime in neighbourhoods, encouraging local people to bring ideas which would reflect their local knowledge and understanding of how to prevent and reduce crime, engage young people and do something positive. The money for the fund comes from cash seized by Police from criminals.</p>
4	<p>Chief Constable Update</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Constable, Mike O'Hara, gave an update which covered the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Last month, the Chief reported on the tragic murder of Leo Ross, and the investigation continues with a trial anticipated in June 2025. The Commander of Birmingham and ACC Bell continue to work with partners for any opportunities for learning that may arise. II. There is continued good performance across all areas. III. The Chief's absence is due to an intense period of promotions, which is a very important time for officers, staff, and the community, as new leaders for the West Midlands are selected.
5	<p>Questions from AGB members</p> <p>Question 1: Firearms Licensing (Asked by DPCC Wasim Ali)</p> <p>Given the announced increases in firearms licensing fees, the Assistant Chief Constable was asked to provide details of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) How much additional income the increase in fees is expected to generate, all things being equal? (2) The new "net" cost of the joint firearms licensing function, given the anticipated additional income? (3) How the performance of our joint firearms licensing function compares to that seen elsewhere? (4) What information is available on the potential national Service Level Agreement for firearms licensing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are four factors to note: WMP are currently unable to accurately anticipate the impact of the license fee increase on renewals and new applications; Statutory guidance of Police Chief's is due to change, additional work into firearms licensing is anticipated which will impact on the cost and running of the department; It is currently unclear how much police forces will be expected to pay for new accredited training for staff, but WMP have already been doing training prior to the College of Policing training package; The Force is currently using an outdated IT

	<p>system, and there is work ongoing nationally in relation to the new licensing system, which is currently going through procurement with Police Digital Services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income from renewals and new licenses are both expected to double. During a five-year cycle, the income generated should increase by £135,000 per year, which equates to £675,000 over the five-year firearms licensing period. • The anticipated average income will be approximately £270,000 per annum, but the firearms licensing department between West Midlands and Staffordshire currently costs over £1,000,000. The Force anticipates the cost of administering the licensing process for West Midlands alone to be £434,000, representing a 62% cost recovery for potential net cost. • The two key measures looked at on a national level are the percentage of simple applications completed in a 16-week period, and the number of temporary permits issued. In January 2025, national statistics showed that WMP completed 81% of renewal applications within the 16-week period, which is the national average. The Force also had 40 temporary permits which was just below the national average of 31. In 2023, the Force had over 900 temporary permits in the West Midlands alone. • Information available on potential national service level agreements is unknown at this stage
6	<p>Substance Misuse Presented by ACC Claire Bell</p> <p>This item was presented by ACC Claire Bell. The following discussion took place:</p> <p>Explain the difference between the Regional Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group and the Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation (SOC-EX) Tasking Meetings, and how they work together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Regional Tactical Tasking and Coordination Group is a tasking process, involving the four forces of the region and other partners. SOC-EX taskings create a prioritisation of threats as they are assessed. <p>What action is being taken on the allocation of resources to address issues in Birmingham and Coventry?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work was undertaken to provide training to Local Policing Areas (LPAs) to identify County Lines. This was underpinned by a risk assessment matrix, referenced in the report. LPAs work closely with County Lines taskforces. This provided a clear picture of where County Lines were operating, with Birmingham being the main location for exports. Resources are allocated around the main risk areas and gives investment and support to Birmingham and Coventry LPAs through to the point of a charge being made. <p>What are the objectives and aims of Operation Skyclash in reference to criminally and sexually exploited young and vulnerable people as a consequence of County Lines?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Criminal exploitation of young and vulnerable people within County Lines is a problem. Several clear pursuit activities are taking place. Operation Skyclash was instigated to address the gap in protection of young people being criminally exploited. The Violence Reduction Partnership and LPA hub-leads have a clear role to play within the access to commissioned services and working alongside partners such as Change, Grow, Live, who work with young people at risk. This is supported by fortnightly meetings where concerns are raised for those at risk, a structured plan to address those risks, and recording of child non-crime matters to understand the impact of referrals and discuss strategies with relevant teams in the West Midlands. <p>How does the County Lines taskforce work with the Major Crime Unit, and where is the inter-operability between those operations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The County Lines taskforce sits within the Major Crime Unit. The LPAs link in with individual victims.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The County Lines taskforce leads are present at daily threat management meetings to understand any intelligence linking discharge to a County Line. There is a monthly governance threat-grid meeting to understand any links between reported crime, serious crime, and County Lines. This ensures joined-up working and inter-operability. <p>Are there any updates on the progress of drugs labs and the benefits of delivery in West Midlands Police?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A long time in the making, starting with the recruitment of additional drugs-witness experts. The work is part of the development around forensics and the fragility of the forensic marketplace. The Force are carrying out work to take back control of forensics and to stabilise their ability of testing and reporting. There is some capability for non-evidential drug-testing when charging individuals in custody and seeking remand. <p>Is this model around the drugs lab something that has been replicated across other areas in the country, or is this an example of West Midlands Police leading the way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure, but West Midlands Police have an excellent forensics department and often lead the way. There is some desire to control some of the marketplace but unsure if any other force does. <p>ACTION: ACC Claire Bell to confirm scheduled date for drugs lab to go live in 2025 and whether other drugs labs exist across the country.</p> <p>Is there evidence that DIVERT programmes are reducing reoffending?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possession of drug offences and drawing conclusions from the data is difficult. Evidence is building for the uptake of DIVERT and the ability for people to remain out of the system. Increase in cases being dealt with by Community Resolution, evidencing that the DIVERT programme is being used at the earliest opportunity. Tracking through reoffending is a national issue for out of court disposals. DIVERT referrals this year are higher, which is positive and shows that the training is working. Paragraph 27 states that in 2023-2024, 84% of referrals were for Cannabis. This figure is incorrect and should be 58%. This includes adults and under 18s, but 31% of the total figure for that year was for a 'not recorded substance', which may lead to inaccuracies. <p>The offender to recovery programme is expanding to more LPAs. What are the biggest barriers to scaling it effectively, and how is West Midlands Police addressing them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The programme requires partnership working. There is still ongoing work with some LPAs to work with partners, but each LPA has different financial challenges and drugs rehabilitation resource. Discussion around retail crime and support from OPCC is helpful. The Commissioner confirmed he is dedicated and committed to do all he can to support the programme across the West Midlands. <p>Given the recent rise of synthetic Opioid related deaths, how robust is WMP's early warning system? How quickly can intelligence be acted on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships have become more established. Deaths are being flagged through a daily tasking process to understand links and patterns with public health partners and Local Authorities. The Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) oversees delivery groups at different levels, looking at threats at a wider perspective and engaging with other ROCUs across the country to understand movement of commodities. <p>Which partners are Serious Organised Crime (SOC) profiles being shared with? How does the Force ensure recipients understand expectations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These profiles are published with partners across a locality.
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	<p>What is the impact of the Nitrous Oxide Change? What is the assessment of the new piece of legislation? Is it still as prevalent?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no benchmark, and there are lots of anecdotal understanding of Nitrous Oxide. • Not seeing cannisters lying around in parks as much, which would suggest a decrease in use. It has not been eradicated but is certainly not as prevalent. <p>ACC Bell confirmed that she will be undertaking a review of good practice around the new Nitrous Oxide legislation, and its prevalence nationally.</p> <p>Are there any plans to enhance and extend use of Naloxone carriage amongst officers, and to what extent are officers aware that they can voluntarily carry this first aid kit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The information was not readily available during the meeting. <p>ACTION: ACC Claire Bell to ask Pervez Mohammed if there are any plans to enhance and extend the use of Naloxone carriage amongst officers, and to the extent that they are aware that they can voluntarily carry this.</p> <p>Are there any sanctions that are applied for individuals who do not choose to / are not able to engage with the DIVERT option?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is down to the investigating officer to decide how to progress the investigation. • Working with Cranston to increase attendance. <p>Looking at the two case studies, is there any learning that has arisen? Was there any possibility of early intervention?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of work went into this. The Force has illustrated a proactive stance from licensing officers. • There can be a lot of work ongoing in the background on how to manage the best approach. <p>Can WMP to object to license applications? What capacity is there for WMP to be able to monitor the premises across the West Midlands to ensure compliance with licensing conditions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMP are upskilling officers in licensing legislation. Bespoke training courses are being led across LPAs. <p>Are there any examples of planned action to further deliver on the commitment to embed the DIVERT programme across the Force?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The out of court disposal team regularly input to relevant teams and officers to learn about different opportunities.
7	<p>NABIS Presented by ACC Damian Barratt:</p> <p>This item was presented by ACC Damian Barratt. The following discussion took place:</p> <p>What is the review that is taking place, and what outcomes have been generated by the national amnesty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This relates to blank firing weapons and their ability to be converted. Currently, blank firing weapons are lawful weapons. The ability to convert these into lethal weapons is an issue, and the terminology in the current legislation talks about readily convertible weapons, which are unlawful. The debate revolves around whether something is easily convertible or not. Through the recovery of weapons that have been used in criminal activity, NABIS, working with the National Crime Agency (NCA), have examined weapons and can demonstrate that conversion can be easily done by members of the public. Work has been co-ordinated across the country through ROCU to engage with retailers who have surrendered stocks, to understand who weapons have previously been sold to.

	<p>Is there a time scale for the review process? Is this amnesty similar to the zombie knives and machetes, which was a formal process with a fixed timescale and with the possibility of compensation for weapons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review is complete, and the Government has determined those weapons are now unlawful. • A formal amnesty took place in February 2025 • A regional report can be shared once amnesty is completed. <p>What are the reasons for, and the consequences of, forensic submission delays?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When firearms and materials are recovered from a discharge, it is the responsibility of the home force. There is a memorandum of understanding of submission into NABIS. NABIS is constantly pushing to ensure forces understand their requirements. • NABIS are working hard with experts to navigate through this effectively with Forces. <p>Can you give an indication of timescales for the delivery of mitigations? What sort of costs can be expected? What are the prospects for delivery? What are the ongoing risks of the challenges that will remain in place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are broken down at a granular level but are all linked and are all about the functioning on NABIS. The current database is limited and hosted on a platform that is not interfaced with other systems across policing. The Home Office conducted a review for the replacement of the database at £19,000,000 which was withdrawn, and work moved to the programme of Delivery Landscape Reform Programme (DLRP). The DLRP has now been ceased whilst government consider next steps and considerations. <p>To what extent is the funding that has been identified efficient, and what is its current position? How can you ensure an appropriate level of change management to support the new case management system?</p> <p>The procurement of the case management system is in the design phase. The Force will support the commitment from NABIS reserves. This will naturally create ongoing management costs, but these will be modest on an annual basis and build into proposed budgets for future years. The Police Chief's Council are funded from support across the country, so need their support to continue to deliver this service.</p> <p>What are the mechanisms via which NABIS can get assurances that training is taking place and what is the extent of forces being compliant?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an ongoing issue. The knowledge, understanding, and awareness of officers can be varied. NABIS works hard to prepare and deliver intelligence products, which are shared across all forces, and coordinated across the ROCU to upskill and increase awareness. The ability to monitor compliance is limited currently but this is a key issue to work on. <p>What are the mechanisms for escalation if there are concerns?</p> <p>Through the NABIS Governance Board, there are a range of performance measures that if there was a particular concern it could go straight to the force. In those rare cases, it has been a prompt response.</p> <p>How will partnerships with universities contribute to forensic and ballistic innovation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work that NABIS does in conjunction with the NCA and other partners is around trying to understand emerging threats. • There is a current programme of work looking at recovering traditional forensic samples from examinations of 3D printing. <p>How does NABIS ensure that smaller forces with limited expertise receive support to handle cases effectively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and understanding varies across forces. NABIS works hard to identify a single point of contact in every force who are upskilled in all matters of criminal use of firearms, to ensure that education takes place and awareness is raised.
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	<p>What is the reason for a 5% reduction in budget, and how can that be reconciled with the mission statement of the NABIS strategy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of the progression of NABIS, the Force are nationally recognised and are engaging internationally due to the movement of weapons. The Force are recognised as a high-level service for ballistic intelligence. • The funding and the reduction of 5% has a contextual element of timing at the end of the three-year budget settlement and has included a 1% factor in pay increase. The pay increases that have been awarded have been absorbed by the NABIS funding envelope. The 5% is to address pay awards and is now built into the budget moving forward. The finance committee have set some general rules which have been agreed by chief constables across the country, with the expectation that national funding streams would seek to achieve and deliver the same sort of efficiencies.
8	<p>Strategic Policing Requirement Presented by ACC Mike O'Hara</p> <p>This item was presented by ACC Mike O'Hara. The following discussion took place:</p> <p>Are there any examples of NCA resources having been made available to ROCU West Midlands? How has that contributed to preventing and tackling SOC in the region?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force are supported by the NCA in their international capability to progress investigations. The NCA offer reciprocal intelligence to support investigations. <p>What is the difference between a request for support and being tasked by the NCA under Section 5.1.A, Crime and Courts Act 2013?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taskings are rare and are a formal agreement. They do not happen without prior consultation and engagement. • Requests are a two-way process whereby WMP can also make requests of the NCA. <p>Paragraph 30 discusses the realignment of 24 officers' posts back to WMP. How are those posts going to be reallocated to WMP? Are there any discussion/plans to benefit from that realignment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The figures described in the paper are regionally funded. The posts will be deployed into SOC vulnerabilities. <p>Paragraph 31 discusses reductions in officer posts from 407 to 371. From a regional perspective, what impact will that have on the capacity and performance within the West Midlands ROCU?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to achieve efficiency within ROCU were addressed and these will limit impact on performance. <p>Is it possible to reconcile the competing issues of pressure and uncertainty relating to the reduction of 12 deputy constables from the Investigations Department Establishment, and the three factors that provide for that pressure and uncertainty?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is counterterrorism (CT) policing nationally, not the West Midlands region. • This is because of the realignment of resources to address current threats. <p>To what extent do we understand what is driving the increased level of vulnerability and engagement with terrorist activity in young people? Are there any examples where traditional Criminal Justice (CJ) outcomes are not always appropriate in those circumstances?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The consideration of alternative approaches to CJ outcomes in relation to CT investigations is a complex picture and requires a balanced well-informed professional judgement from senior investigators. • The Force has well-informed threat assessments for online radicalisation that are shared regularly. Social media is becoming less controlled and an increasingly challenging issue for policing.

	<p>How does the National CT referral unit operate to recover online material?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unit acts as a single point of reference for engaging with internet platform providers, helping to navigate issues in an informed way. <p>What are the most fragile capabilities that are difficult to maintain and sustain in order to be effective in the Force's and ROCU's response to SOC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical capabilities rely on technical functioning and competence, which comes at a significant cost. • The inter-operability at a national level is a focus through police reform activity. • Having a skilled workforce to continue to deliver on capabilities. <p>Do the risk management processes inside the Force and ROCU identify capabilities that are at risk or problematic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is stability around expectations of other forces and are all working to ensure forces can commit people into roles within ROCU. <p>What processes, training, and accreditation are in place to ensure the appropriate use of new powers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force is in the early stages with subject-matter experts within CT policing, although it has not been widely tested. • From a wider perspective, learning is currently limited to an online package. Whilst comprehensive, it is difficult to navigate. <p>To what extent can it be evidenced that Counterterrorism Local Profiles (CTLPs) are guiding partner organisations' behaviour?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTLPs are being rolled out regionally with good partner engagement and attendance. Responses demonstrate good receptiveness and understanding, with two-way conversations taking place to progress agendas. <p>Given the concerns raised by HMICFRS in their report on the disorder last summer, what is the plan to get the number of Level 2 trained officers up to 1,300?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Force is confident that it can increase level of public order Level 2 trained officers. <p>How is the interoperability of plans for a major cyber incident between WMP, other forces and other organisations ensured?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is led at a national level. Threats are fed through national cyber security centres into cyber resilience centres regionally to ensure cyber-assurance. • Additional work being done through Local Resilience Forum (LRM). <p>Is there something comparable to the CT exercise programme for cyber incidents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not across agencies, but they are run within policing at a national and regional level. <p>What is the pattern of growth in the number of Registered Sex Offenders in recent years? How can WMP build and maintain capacity for a continually growing cohort?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seen for several years, particularly in an online space. Some of the biggest growth is amongst children themselves. Following the work with HMIC, WMP increased the number of sex offender managers and the amount of supervision around management. <p>How is technology like ANPR being used to disrupt criminals using our road networks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general gap-analysis has been completed as part of national strategy and shows that as a Force, WMP are leading around the use of ANPR technology and intelligence. • The Force are recruiting additional staff to ANPR proactive capabilities. <p>What proactive steps are WMP taking to prevent a backlog of CSE cases?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers are not immediately translatable to the amount of ongoing work. Well-established structures ensure preparation and understanding.
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	<p>What are the biggest challenges in securing convictions against Violence Against Women and Girls? What can be done to address these challenges?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMP have worked hard to implement Stalking Protection Orders, introduce a Stalking Clinic to guide staff and identify cases, and there have been improvements in evidence-led prosecutions taking place. <p>What innovative approaches are WMP using to increase victim-confidence in reporting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WMP are a leading Force in piloting Operation Soteria to deal with rape and serious sexual offences. Work is victim-centred and suspect-focused, supporting victims using commissioned services, and taking away pressure from victims' testimonies and accounts by building an investigation that looks through the lens of the suspect and evidences their behaviours. <p>Is it possible to summarise the action taken within WMP to prevent and tackle CSE/CSA and provide wider public reassurance about how seriously this is being taken by WMP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Force has a Public Protection Unit which allows expertise to sit in a single function. Child Protection Teams have always been maintained, and child sexual abuse investigations take place by specialist officers. Safeguarding Boards exist in each local authority area, and local police sit on these Boards. Investigations have the same structure as any other serious crime, including the speed of investigations.
	<p>CLOSE</p> <p>Date of next meeting – Tuesday 25 March 2025.</p>