



## Accountability and Governance Board

### Notes of the Meeting

Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> October 2025

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

1	<p><b>Attendance</b></p> <p>Wasim Ali (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, OPCC) Helen Davis (Assistant Director for IT &amp; Digital and Information Management Departments, WMP) Paul Drover (Assistant Chief Constable, WMP) Simon Foster (Police and Crime Commissioner, OPCC) Alethea Fuller (Deputy Chief Executive, OPCC) Peter Gillett (Director of Commercial Services, WMP) Scott Green (Deputy Chief Constable, WMP) Jane Heppel (Chief Financial Officer, OPCC) Tony Hopkins (Detective Chief Superintendent, Public Protection, WMP) Jonathan Jardine (Chief Executive, OPCC) Natalie Queiroz (Victims' Advocate, OPCC)</p> <p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Craig Guildford (Chief Constable, WMP) Davinder Jagpal (Service Director – Finance, WMP) Matt Welstead (Assistant Chief Constable, WMP)</p>
2	<p><b>Notes of last meeting</b></p> <p>The notes of the last meeting were approved.</p>
3	<p><b>PCC Update</b></p> <p>The Police and Crime Commissioner provided an update which covered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>I. The PCC has welcomed the launch of a parliamentary vehicle registration plate enquiry. This is a major development in the PCC's campaign to address the increase of illegal ghost plates. The enquiry, led by all-party parliamentary group for transport safety, will examine the growing problem of untraceable number plates that allow dangerous drivers and criminals to evade accountability and detection on UK roads. This enquiry will bring offenders to justice and keep road-users safe. A recent WMP operation identified thousands of so-called ghost plates. The PCC has been campaigning nationally on this issue for a while but is pleased to see it gaining momentum. As such, on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 the PCC and local MP Sarah Coombes will brief members of parliament in Westminster on this issue. The PCC urged that 3D and 4D plates should be banned and parliament needs to act.</li><li>II. The OPCC held the Outstanding Citizens Awards at the Brasshouse Community Centre on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2025. The region came together to honour</li></ul>

	<p>extraordinary individuals and community groups who go above and beyond to make a difference. The PCC stated it was a tremendous privilege to recognise people who embody the very best of the West Midlands. Each nominee made an extraordinary contribution to making communities safer, stronger and fairer. On behalf of the West Midlands, he thanked them for the vital work they do to make a positive different to the lives of others.</p> <p>III. The Police and Crime Plan outlines that the rights and welfare of victims must be at the forefront at policing and the wider CJS. The Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 created new duties for complying with the Victims Code and requires the PCC to continuously review how criminal justice bodies are providing a service in accordance with that duty. On 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025, as chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board, the PCC brought together partners across West Midlands to work collectively and collaboratively to ensure victims have access to support and help across the CJS at all times.</p> <p>IV. The latest crime statistics, released on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, are testament to the commitment, dedication, and professionalism of police officers, staff and partners across the West Midlands. There are nearly 20,000 fewer victims of crime, meaning fewer lives are disrupted and communities are stronger and safer. The PCC particularly welcomes the reduction in burglary, knife crime, gun crime and serious youth violence. Reduction in knife-point robberies and the lowest number of firearms discharged in six years, shows the PCC and WMP's focus on preventing and tackling violence is working. However, the PCC will not be complacent and will continue to hold WMP to account. There is still significant improvement needed regarding sexual offences, drugs, and shop theft. However, the direction of travel is positive. The PCC thanked WMP and partners across the region for their continued, unremitting action to prevent crime.</p>
4	<p><b>Chief Constable Update</b></p> <p>The Chief Constable update was delivered by Deputy Chief Constable Scott Green, and covered the following:</p> <p>I. WMP are entering into an operationally busy period for policing. The necessary preparations are in the place for the approach of darker nights, Halloween and Bonfire night. WMP are currently managing several serious ongoing crime investigations that the PCC has been briefed on. WMP are in the final preparation stages for the Christmas period and Birmingham City Centre markets. Although the Force's preparations and operational management of events are tried and tested, WMP will not be complacent and be vigilant in its protection of the public.</p> <p>II. At the end of last week, the Deputy Chief Constable had the privilege of attending the Police Public Bravery Awards. Six members of the public from the West Midlands were recognised for their bravery in extreme circumstances. The Deputy Chief Constable was delighted to confirm that 4 of the nominees received gold medals and 2 received silver medals.</p> <p>III. Organisationally, WMP are still focused on the roll out of the neighbourhood policing model. They have also made changes to the grading policy which they have briefed the PCC on. The Chief and Deputy Chief Constable and the Police and Crime PCC had the honour of attending the WMP Diwali celebration.</p> <p>IV. WMP also recognise the positivity of the ONS statistics, which show a fall in burglary, robbery and theft from the person. This is something that WMP are extremely proud of. The officers, staff and volunteers who worked together to</p>

	<p>deliver these results have saved many potential victims from the significant impact such crimes have on lives.</p>
5	<p><b>Questions from AGB members</b></p> <p><b>Question 1: Cyber Security (asked by Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Wasim Ali)</b></p> <p>As the force upgrades its IT systems to Windows 11, what assurances can the Chief Constable provide that West Midlands Police is taking all necessary steps to ensure that cyber risks to policing are fully understood and well managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WMP are in the middle of an update to Windows 11. The risks this presents have been mitigated and the approach to the transition balances operational effectiveness with security. This approach ensures confidentiality, integrity and the availability of policing information during the transition. Windows 11 does not change WMP's risk profile for cyber vulnerability.</li> <li>• WMP are not immune to cyber-attacks and other organisations have been subject to vulnerabilities, so the change to Windows 11 is necessary. Training is in place to ensure Officers and staff are aware of the risks, including fishing exercises.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 2: Community Tensions (asked by Victims' Advocate Natalie Queiroz)</b></p> <p>What can West Midlands Police do to address increased community tensions arising from the terrible attack on the synagogue and the Jewish community in Manchester?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Deputy Chief Constable expressed that his thoughts remain with everyone affected by the attack and WMP's support for Greater Manchester Police and Counter Terror operations remains in place. WMP recognise the concerns across all communities, particularly Jewish and Muslim communities. However, the Force's community impact assessments haven't detected any threat change at a local level.</li> <li>• Operation Elevon is WMP's response to the attack and covers the totality of the policing response. On the day of the attack, the Birmingham Policing Commander convened an operational meeting with the Community Safety Trust (CST) regional leaders and Superintendents across Birmingham and Solihull within an hour of the story breaking in the press. A protective security patrol strategy was discussed with CST, including daily visits to high-profile Jewish locations with tailored patrols around schools at the start and end of the day. Working with colleagues from the Protect and Prepare strand of the CT network, WMP began a security assessment of five synagogues. An operational meeting led by a Chief Inspector addresses patrol activity for each coming week, and a Chief Superintendent has held internal listening circles for staff. The CTS have been overwhelmed by WMP's support and ongoing work with Jewish and Muslim leaders. WMP are facilitating joint communications as they continue to find the balance across communities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question 3: Flying of Flags (asked by Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster)</b></p> <p>Concerns have been expressed to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, by way of correspondence and in person to the Police and Crime Commissioner at a public meeting in Stirchley, Birmingham, that the erecting of flags in public places and attached to public street furniture, without the permission of Birmingham City Council, has been causing harassment, alarm and distress to members of the local community and has been contributing, to a significant and unwelcome rise in community tensions.</p> <p>What action is West Midlands Police taking, to proactively prevent a rise in community tensions, promote trust and confidence within the local community, work in partnership with Birmingham City Council, communicate the action it is taking to the local community and enforce the law, in an appropriate and proportionate manner?</p>

- Raising of flags across West Midlands remains an emotive issue, and the reaction differs between communities. Some areas see the flags as purposely divisive and having an anti-migrant sentiment; some communities celebrate the flags; and other communities are extremely divided on the issue. The street furniture they have been attached to does not belong to WMP, however, policing must understand the sentiments of communities so that they can be aware of any flags being raised and prevent a breach of the peace. WMP have and will take enforcement action where offences are being committed. Neighbourhood policing teams have good relationships with local leaders and will continue to engage with local communities. They are best placed to respond and communicate with their areas, rather than WMP sending out blanket, central communications that do not recognise the nuance of a particular area. WMP are part of the solution to this issue but not the only solution.

**Question 4: Dedicated Neighbourhood Officers (asked by Police and Crime Commissioner Simon Foster)**

Firstly, can the Chief Constable provide an update, on the extent to which Dedicated Neighbourhood Officers are being ringfenced for the communities they are supporting, so as to ensure they are available, to provide an accessible, visible and reassuring presence in communities?

- DNOs have been introduced as local, identifiable officers who engage with communities and have completed specific problem-solving training. To ensure officers are properly engaging locally, WMP have a policy and a performance tracking mechanism to monitor abstractions from daily duties. Training has been delivered to supervisors and managers on the importance of ring-fencing DNOs and scrutinising abstractions from their core duty of maximising visibility in the local community. DNOs can report individually when they have been abstracted. This data is collated on a performance portal which can be accessed by supervisors and managers. The data is scrutinised by LPA command teams, the ACC responsible for local policing, and at the Deputy Chief Constable's Performance Day. WMP are still trying to establish what classes as positive performance data, and are working through what counts as an abstraction by scrutinising occasions where senior leaders disagree with the DNO's report of an abstraction, to identify a metric for abstractions.

Secondly can the Chief Constable comment on the adequacy of the method, by which DNO's are named and contactable for members of the public, as is required. At the moment, this is through Single Online Home and it requires a considerable number of clicks to make contact and even then, does not actually provide a single email address or phone number for each DNO, as had been expected to be the case. Are there plans to ensure that DNOs are not only named, but also contactable?

- The current system ensures reports submitted through single online home are dealt with in a timely manner and triaged when appropriate. DNOs are part of a buddy system so reports are directed to an officer in a different neighbourhood team if the DNO is on leave. WMP have a high compliance rate in terms of publicising DNO names and photographs on single online home and have done since its roll out.
- WMP are still weighing up the benefits and drawbacks of allowing direct contact between the public and DNOs. Direct reports may refer to serious incidents that could be missed if a DNO is off duty. It is also harder to assess the demands on DNO if there is a lack of oversight of their workload. One proposal is to have an email address for a local neighbourhood team rather than an individual officer. The Deputy Chief Constable agreed with the PCC that single online home isn't particularly user-friendly. Putting up posters of DNOs and their teams in shops and post offices may be a better way to inform the public of their DNO and neighbourhood team.

6	<p><b>Digital and Data Strategy Presented by Helen Davis, Assistant Director for IT &amp; Digital and Information Management Departments</b></p> <p>This item was presented by Helen Davis. The following discussion took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How have discussions at the Regional Innovation Group (RIG), led to opportunities to share learning and innovation across the wider region?</li> </ul> <p>WMP is three quarters of the way through its implementation of Windows 11, whereas neighbouring forces are further along in this process. Where systems are not compatible with Windows 11, WMP have learnt from other forces around how this implementation has been achieved. This has saved time. Other forces do not have the same robotic processing automation capability and WMP have helped to share learning on how this was procured with another force looking to bring in similar technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aside from Andi-Esra, are there any other projects which have received Home Office Innovation Funding since 2023? If so, what has been learnt from these projects, and have any of these become business-as-usual?</li> </ul> <p>Digital Forensics have gained funding for 3D printing initiatives, which will become business-as-usual. Other areas of the business will be submitting requests for funding for the next financial year, assisted by colleagues in Corporate Development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is reference to WMP benefitting from around £130,000 in Home Office Innovation (STAR) Funding since 2023. The PCC highlighted that this seems to be a modest sum, considering the importance of technology as a resource for policing. Is this funding adequate or fit for purpose? And to what extent does this meet the technology needs of WMP?</li> </ul> <p>The funding is small when considered against the costs of technology. The pot available from STAR Funding is around £250,000, and the amount allocated is dependent on the bid presented. This is just one initiative, and other initiatives are Force funded. There is additional funding for robotic processing, as WMP have been asked to be the Centre for Excellence on this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does the IT Delivery Plan consist of and what are its objectives?</li> </ul> <p>The IT Delivery Plan contains nearly 200 items, covering everything from initiatives going through governance; scheduled work that the Development Team are proactively engaged with; work that has been through governance but is not yet scheduled; robotic processing requirements; and in the future there will be artificial intelligence requirements. The purpose of the initial delivery plan is for the Force Executive Team to review priorities and ensure they are aligned to the Police and Crime Plan. Priorities inform how resources are allocated to pieces of work. This is necessary due to the number of initiatives ongoing at any one time. This plan then forms lower-level delivery plans for teams to work towards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What capacity is available to deal with nearly 200 projects simultaneously? And are there different timescales around the delivery of these 200 projects?</li> </ul> <p>Not all projects are simultaneous. The team usually work on three or four projects simultaneously, which is why prioritisation and flexibility are necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many staff are in the User Experience Team, and what are some examples of projects they have worked on which have improved efficiency and effectiveness of officer and staff time?</li> </ul> <p>There are currently two people in the User Experience Team. Two more graduate trainees will be recruited for this team due to its success. The team have helped with the user storage</p>
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for Andi-Esra when it was initiated. They also worked with robbery teams around the journey taken by an officer when dealing with a robbery. The team were able to save officers around two hours per robbery through looking at the systems used in this process. Due to the success of the User Experience Team, they are now being asked for support by areas of the business which may be struggling with an aspect of technology.

- What are some examples of projects where the Continuous Improvement Team have delivered and deployed systems improvements?

There were some frustrations from colleagues about the way the Digital Pocket Notebook app was set out, and the team were able to make changes within five working days. A lot of changes are app based, but they have also made some changes to Connect to improve efficiency. This work is delivered quickly based on requests from officers.

- How do WMP judge that technology deployment has improved front-line efficiency?

Colleagues will provide feedback when a change has not improved efficiency, and this feedback is actively encouraged. Each project has benefits realisation associated with it, managed by Corporate Development. Robotic processing is built in-house and owned by IT. Metrics are managed and checked monthly, and efficiency savings have been made of over eight million pounds. Mobile apps can be measured by usage, and apps with low usage can be addressed.

- In relation to the IT Delivery Plan, what are the blockers to delivery of this plan?

There is a balance between delivering new technology and maintaining current systems, and there are capacity issues due to demand for new technology.

- How are savings from recycling of devices being turned into cashable benefits and reinvested?

Mobile phones and desktops are being recycled, and money is coming in as income generation to the Force. The benefit is between ten and fifteen pounds per mobile phone, whereas previously there was a cost of eight pounds per phone for these devices to be safely destroyed. There is a backlog of old desktops in storage to be recycled so more income will be generated from these. The benefit is estimated as £50,000 to £75,000 per year, which will increase to £200,000 per year once the current backlog is processed. This money is handled by Finance as income generation for WMP. This money is taken from the £15 million which will need to be saved in the next financial year.

- How are WMP showing that AI is lawful and ethical before it is rolled out?

West Midlands Police is not actively using AI. The use of Co-Pilot will be discussed at the Change Board next month, and AI will be adopted in a cautious way. Privacy-by-design and ethical-by-design-nature, as well as legal and ethical standards, will have to be complied with, and compliance will have to be evidenced. It is important to consider information management in the implementation of any AI system. Nothing will be signed off without the approval of the Deputy Chief Constable, who is the Senior Information Risk Officer for WMP, on behalf of the Chief Constable, who is the Information Controller.

- Will there be more government recommendations around the use of AI, and support for forces around its use?

Directives and recommendations will be received from the government, but the data held is WMP data and it is held for a policing purpose. ACC Welstead is keen to explore the use of technology including AI and is the national lead for AI. DCC Green is more cautious around the use of AI. WMP will continue to listen to national recommendations, but ultimately it is the responsibility of WMP to protect the data it holds.

- In terms of practicalities of machines being replaced every five years, as opposed to every three, are there concerns that machines may degrade quickly which could have an impact on efficiencies?

This is currently being tested on the IT Team, who have had laptops replaced every five years as opposed to every three years, which has not caused any major issues. The devices used are not the cheapest on the market, and therefore they have a longer shelf life and are more robust. Batteries are often a big issue, but it is cheaper to swap batteries than replace devices completely.

- What is the process involved in identifying projects to be taken forward for STAR funding?

Anybody in the force with an idea for funding can approach Corporate Development, who are experts in the protocol and criteria for bids, and decide which projects are put forward for funding. Corporate Development triage the idea to see whether it fits the criteria and assist in putting bids together. Some ideas which come through as bids for funding can be done in-house quickly and cheaply so would not be put forward.

- How is the conflict between innovation and stability, and its associated costs, managed?

Due to the structure of the department and different skillsets of colleagues, stability and innovation receive different resources so conflicts are few. The DCC is presented with priorities, and security and stability are given priority over new innovations.

- Has any learning come from the Regional Innovation Group (RIG) which has been adopted by WMP?

Other forces have offered learning where they have been ahead in the roll out of Windows 11, and WMP have offered learning around MS 365 and Microsoft changes. It has also been valuable to learn from other forces around what they have achieved through STAR bids.

- What is the governance and control around the development of intellectual property and ensuring that this is not lost at less than its value?

Some work done by WMP will generate potential commercial value. The work done on Andi-Esra has commercial potential. Intellectual property is considered when working with grant funding bodies or with other private sector partners to maximise potential commercial value.

- How many projects are currently recorded on the formal register for AI opportunities?

These are initiatives which are not currently at project stage. There are currently twelve initiatives which are being triaged by technical architects to give a weighting to security, potential risks, and data assessment.

- Does WMP have the capacity and capability to be able to rise to the challenge of developing and implementing AI opportunities?

Yes, this has been proven in the past. WMP has its own Centre of Excellence for automation, which no other police force has done. Mobile apps are also developed in-force. Staff are being trained to become subject matter experts, and MS 365 is a good training ground for this. Staff are also gaining skills in power-automation. This is a key point of graduate training programmes. Concerns are around data guardianship rather than technological capability.

- How is WMP ensuring security of data when recycling devices?

All force data, including sim cards, is removed in-house, and each device is checked by the IT Department to ensure they are cleared. This is the same process as when a mobile device is lost or stolen – the device can be stunned and wiped centrally.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On page 5 of the report there is reference to future work and emerging trends. Will this enable WMP to keep pace with new technologies, particularly in terms of the pace with which criminals can exploit new technologies? Or will further investment be needed to ensure officers and staff have the necessary equipment to fulfil their roles? What would make the single biggest difference to WMP to achieve this?</li> </ul> <p>Policing may struggle to keep pace, as governance and protocols have to be followed. Policing can never operate in the way that criminals can because we are not outside the law so cannot access the same tools. WMP will however be at pace with the rest of UK policing, due to having an IT capability that other forces don't have.</p> <p>The PCC concluded this agenda item, highlighting that data is a major resource for policing and collaboration with academia is essential to develop a robust technological knowledge base. The OPCC and WMP will explore opportunities with national partners and programmes and collaborate with statutory partners to support data sharing initiatives to drive crime prevention and mitigate harm. Technology is a significant resource for policing and WMP are expected to proactively scan for emerging trends and ensure the effective and efficient use of existing technology, and to ensure that officers and staff have the right hardware and software. WMP should utilise technology to reduce its carbon footprint and enhance operational efficiency. Use of new technology will be lawful, ethical and proportionate at national, regional and local levels, and Equality Impact Assessments are expected to be undertaken for the deployment of new technology. WMP are expected to fully exploit and support the evidence and best practice resources provided by the College of Policing.</p>
7	<p><b>Protecting the Vulnerable</b>  <b>Presented by Detective Chief Superintendent Tony Hopkins</b></p> <p>This item was presented by DCS Tony Hopkins. The following discussion took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the scale of officers and staff within the PPU? And what is the spectrum of work carried out?</li> </ul> <p>The PPU in WMP is the second largest department, behind Birmingham LPA. The PPU consists of approximately 800 police officers and 400 staff. There are four different portfolios:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rape and Serious Sexual Offence (RASSO), including the Adult in Care Abuse Intervention Team, looking at vulnerable adults who have been exploited or neglected, and the Sex Offender Management Team.</li> <li>Child Abuse Investigation Team of around 400 officers and staff, dealing with child abuse within the home, and any domestic abuse matters involving children under the age of 17.</li> <li>Domestic Abuse Investigation Team, investigating high risk domestic abuse and stalking cases. This team also support the MARAC function, as well as supporting high and medium risk domestic abuse victims.</li> <li>The Vulnerability Pillar looks after central services, including disclosures under Claire's Law and Sarah's Law, and family court disclosure matters. This also includes the Missing Persons Team, which consists of 65 police officers across the West Midlands, covering live and historic cases. A cold-case RASSO team has recently been introduced as a two-year function, using advancements in DNA technology to prosecute historic sexual offences.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is WMP prioritising the identification of repeat and vulnerable victims?</li> </ul> <p>Through Control Works (999 and 101 system) and Connect (crime record management system) the PPU can identify repeat callers and repeat incidents. Local Tasking Delivery Board meetings are attended by a PPU representative, looking at repeat rape victims and suspects, and repeat domestic abuse victims. Domestic Abuse Offender Managers support repeat victims of domestic abuse. All tasking meetings will now feature items showing repeat victims, repeat suspects, and repeat locations. Some adult mental health institutions will generate several calls and require interventions on multiple occasions.</p>

- What does the Shield Initiative do that differs from Operation Skyclash?

This initiative was rebranded to return to its original purpose of tackling exploitation and county lines. The Shield Initiative can be used to understand where children are spoken about in other meetings, including at Missing Persons meetings, aiming to look at a multi-agency response.

- Are outcomes from the Shield Initiative evaluated and monitored?

The outcomes are not currently monitored. It would be good to look at the governance of the new design to understand what good outcomes look like. As director of PPU, DCS Hopkins aims to have a relationship with the head of Children's Services in each of the seven local authorities to ensure that matters are escalated appropriately. The approach to exploitation is being constantly monitored. High numbers are being safeguarded and protected, and high numbers of offenders are being brought to justice. The Shield Initiative has led to a more coordinated response.

- What is known about the prevalence of child criminal exploitation, and is there any data on the profiles of individuals involved in perpetrating child criminal exploitation?

A victim profile has been signed off and will be shared with partners. This is the WMP approach to CCE and CSE, but it is lacking partnership data, and different partners have different figures on how CCE and CSE are flagged. CSE is reported at the DCC's performance day on a monthly basis, and the number of cases being marked is increasing monthly due to increased understanding and increased alertness to CSE cases. In terms of offenders, there is not yet a full profile. The next six months' worth of data, as well as the CSE meeting, will need to be used to respond to CSE offenders.

- Will WMP make full use of the proposed Child Criminal Exploitation Prevention Orders when these become available?

As long as sign off and processes are clear, WMP should be able to utilise these orders fully. Over the last 12 months, all of the different Orders and Powers have been brought together, and are now on a map, visually displayed with robust checks around them.

- There is mention of the National Child Protection Inspection; the Child Protection Improvement Board; and the Child Protection Executive Oversight Board. What are the remits of these boards?

The Improvement Board was chaired monthly by DCS Hopkins. Representatives across WMP look at responses to recommendations, action plans and progress. DCS Hopkins then reported into the Executive Board, chaired by ACC Mattinson, involving management from different departments. This is then reported into the DCC's performance day.

- What is the Philomena Protocol and what are its aims and objectives? Has there been an update on the Protocol since it was rolled out? There is a suggestion that, following its introduction, monthly reduction of up to 200 missing persons have been observed, up to November 2024.

The Philomena protocol aimed to improve the police response to children who did not return to looked after children's locations. Work was done with care providers and in contact centres with call handlers. A reduction was seen in the number of missing children as checks were being undertaken by care locations. At a Missing Operational Group meeting, it may be highlighted if a care location is repeatedly calling regarding missing children, and there would then be a joint meeting between the PPU Missing Persons Team and the LPA to investigate the reasons behind this trend.

- How effective is collaborative working in practice? Are there gaps or ways to improve?

WMP is one police service working across seven local authorities and three integrated care boards. It is important to understand the governance of multi-agency meetings, as well as understanding the reasons for lack of attendance. There is good partnership attendance at MARAC and MAPPA, but WMP must consider which meetings partners need to attend to ensure collaborative working. For Children's Strategy meetings, an online Teams booking system has been brought in to ensure that partners can attend all the relevant meetings. It would be good to have data to remind partners of where there have been gaps in attendance. Every day, every week, and every month, WMP are part of a partnership looking at prioritising children and vulnerable adults, understanding risks, and agreeing responses. There is opportunity to improve and streamline the people in attendance at meetings, but WMP are in the relevant discussions across every local authority area. One potential challenge is changes within NHS England, specifically in relation to mental health. All strategic leads in the region are committed to collaborative working.

- When Child Criminal Exploitation Protection Orders come in, where will the responsibility for these sit within WMP?

Domestic Violence Protection Orders are owned across Crime and Local Policing. ACC Drover will work with DCS Hopkins and the PPU to maximise the best use of the tools available. Ownership will sit with Local Policing, with a degree of oversight, and reporting will be similar to the process of DV Protection Orders.

- Child Criminal exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation are evolving areas, particularly in the online space. The report refers to SIPOs and DSLs. Is there a training gap in knowledge for DSLs? And do they understand complexities, signs and interventions?

SIPOs sit as a local policing team, but as part of a partnership team. There are products used in primary and secondary schools to raise awareness and understanding. Training is never a completed task; it can always be updated as crime types evolve and change. 25 – 30 years ago, Child Sexual Exploitation was not understood the way it is today. There are still gaps today in understanding of Child Criminal Exploitation. There is an ongoing review of SIPOs, and whether this model is effective. It may not necessarily be the role of policing to address the training needs of DSLs in schools. SIPOs cannot fill educational gaps.

- Could packages be developed using the knowledge of WMP, to ensure that DSLs have the relevant knowledge?

Every Child Safeguarding Board has a Task and Finish Learning and Development Board, which a DC or DS from the PPU will sit on. Between the seven Child Safeguarding Boards, the PPU is looking to coordinate work around what the gaps are across child safeguarding in particular areas. A lot of funding goes into partnership training, and it is important for WMP to be involved in these conversations. This is wider than just DSLs; it involves every front-line children's worker.

- Are Return Home Interviews carried out by an officer when a missing young person has been found? Is this the best use of the officer's time or are they often met with resistance? Would these interviews be more effective if carried out by youth workers?

There are two responses to when a missing person is found. A Prevent Interview should be undertaken by police to close a report, and a Return Home Interview is undertaken by local authority or child safeguarding partners. Services vary across the local authorities. The Prevent Interview may give limited answers, and a police officer may not be the best person to conduct a Return Home Interview, so it is important to work with care home providers to determine their involvement in these interviews. For every missing child found, WMP are involved in a Multi-Agency Missing Strategy Meeting to understand what has happened whilst the child has been absent.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does WMP ensure that Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation markers and flags are applied consistently?</li> </ul> <p>Question sets and trees have been made clearer, particularly around definitions of group Child Sexual Exploitation. Only the Crime Service Team can apply these flags, following positive outcomes from Child Protection teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does WMP ensure that trauma-informed practice moves beyond training given to officers, and into cultural and operational change?</li> </ul> <p>Training packages were delivered through Barnardo's and trauma informed practice is discussed in multiple programmes. This will be discussed with the DCC when looking at victims' services. There is work ongoing to push TRIM to officers attending incidents, and to understand trauma on officers attending incidents, as well as on victims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How confident is WMP in the accuracy of Right Care Right Person data, in terms of police compliance with principles around this, and in terms of partnership working?</li> </ul> <p>This question has arisen in Mental Health Right Care Right Person discussions. There is a reduced handover time between police and healthcare professionals. One area of potential improvement is the impact on calls for service. Calls for service were expected to decrease as Right Care Right Person came in, but this was not the case. The way in which calls are closed has not allowed for a degree of scrutiny. Data collection around actions following police contact needs to continue to improve. Right Care Right Person is making an impact in terms of the overarching objective of getting individuals to care quicker and reducing contact time for police officers, but there is more to be achieved in terms of obtaining details and partnership data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would partners say that this is working?</li> </ul> <p>The Right Care Right Person Partnership Group was stood down a month ago and returned to a Mental Health Board, adapting to changes within NHS England. The group was complimentary about the way that WMP had approached Right Care Right Person. There are ongoing challenges with partnership working, for example the way that suspects going through the Criminal Justice System who may have mental health needs are dealt with.</p> <p>The PCC concluded this agenda item. There are a variety of commitments to protecting the vulnerable in the Police and Crime Plan, including a clear commitment to increase the safety of children and vulnerable adults. WMP is expected to embed preventative policing using problem-solving to reduce vulnerability and tactical offenders, including working with partners to identify and safeguard children and vulnerable adults including those abused in their own homes, and protecting repeat victims by promoting their welfare and ensuring a safer environment for all. WMP should prioritise identifying repeat and vulnerable victims, and repeat offenders, to ensure proactive, preventative and early interventions actions are taken to reduce reoffending and further victimisation. For people in mental health crises, the PCC will work with mental health partners to ensure safe implementation of Right Care Right Person, including an evaluation focused on patient outcomes. For women and girls in the criminal justice system, the PCC will continue to promote a trauma-informed and diversionary approach, seeking the appointment of a senior force lead, to advance work within WMP. As a safeguarding partner, the PCC will collaborate with WMP, health services, and local authorities, to safeguard children, young people, and vulnerable adults, facilitating regional discussions and sharing best practice, and addressing safeguarding challenges.</p>
8	<p><b>Medium Term Financial Plan</b>  <b>Presented by Jane Heppel, Chief Finance Officer</b></p> <p>This paper was presented by Jane Heppel. The following discussion took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the total level of precept that would have to be set from April 2026, in order to bridge the gap in the budget of £15.4 million?</li> </ul>

The decision on the precept is made after other funding options have been exhausted. WMP and the OPCC carry out a priority-based budgeting exercises to ensure that savings opportunities are taken, before a precept increase is considered. If the £15.4 million gap were to be bridged by setting a precept, assuming a £14 rise, a further £19.90 would need to be added to the rise, taking the total increase to £33.90. this would make a Band D precept for next year £263.45, up from the current £229.50.

- Setting this precept would only mean there would not be further cuts imposed on policing. How does this compare to what other forces are expected to set as a precept from April 2026?

The potential increase of £33.90 would give a Band D precept which is still the second lowest in the England and Wales. The average forecast band D precept for next year is expected to be £303.

- What level of precept would the PCC have to set from April 2026 to return WMP to the same level of police officers as in 2010? WMP has around 700 fewer officers than in 2010.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March, WMP had 8,085 officers; at the same time in 2010, WMP had 8,715 officers – a difference of 630. 630 additional officers plus overhead costs would be a cost of around £47 million per year. To fund this by precept alone, there would need to be an increase of £61, taking the Band D precept to £324, which would be above average.

- If WMP had to spend money on refurbishing three police buildings – Wolverhampton, Stechford and Dudley – instead of using the sale of surplus assets to fund them, how much more would the precept need to be increased by to cover these costs?

It is important to try and reuse surplus assets before borrowing. Between these three buildings, refurbishments are expected to come to around £21 million. To fund the increased cost of borrowing, setting aside capital repayment, another £1.75 million per annum would be needed for the next 40 years. This would mean an increase in the precept of £2.26.

- Paragraph 13 references firearms licensing fees. Although these have risen, they do not cover the gap in the cost of ensuring licensing overall. Why is this and what is the current gap?

The current budget gap is £365,000, as of the beginning of the year. Rates are set nationally, and WMP have to keep costs and fee levels under constant review. Based on current information of the year to date, the estimated gap is just over £300,000. Conversations are ongoing with the Home Office and NPCC to ensure that fees and charges can fully recover costs.

- How can there be confidence that the main Police Grant will rise by the level in the Comprehensive Spending Review? And could any top-slices be removed by the Home Office which could reduce this amount?

WMP are aware of current year top-slices from Home Office and are linking in with government colleagues to ensure that WMP remain informed. The medium-term financial plan and reserves strategy is a framework for setting the annual budget. Headline assumptions will be refined when the annual budget is set. Confirmation from Home Office of the final allocation will be received in early December.

- What is the degree to which the decision of the Home Office and Ministry of Justice to hold grant levels at flat cash passes on an inflationary cost to WMP in 2026/27? And how much of a precept increase is required due to the decision by central government?

There are several key grants for delivery. Between these grants, the pressure passed on in the coming year will be around £1.2 million. If the governments wish to continue these elements of delivery at the level that they originally intended, a further £1.2 million would be required. Of the £14 precept increase allowed next year, £1.60 is due to the decision of central government departments not to increase flat cash grants.

- What is incremental drift? And what is the level of confidence in this assessment?

Incremental drift refers to the progression of officers through the pay scale on a year-by-year basis. As new entrants progress through the system, it is important to budget for inflation as well as incremental drift for officers who are not already at the top of their scale. In recent years, there have been many new officers, who will go on to progress and this is considered in projections.

- To what degree is the WMP pension fund now funded regarding its future obligations? And why should WMP see a reduction in its contribution to this scheme as an employer?

The West Midlands Pension Fund is for local government employees, so for staff rather than officers. The contribution rate for officers is set by the government actuarial department. The amount of money that the OPCC Chief Executive and Chief Constable as employers contribute to the future requirement to fund the pensions of existing staff is determined by an actuary once every three years. The last time the triennial evaluation took place, the pension fund was only funded to 60% of its liabilities. There was a reasonable need for the pension fund to contribute to catch up and put aside enough money to fund future requirements. By March 2025, the pension fund was funded to 125% of its liabilities, meaning that when the next triennial evaluation happens there may be a reduction or a standstill in contribution rates. Increases in pension contribution rates have contributed to budget challenges in recent years.

- To what degree is the work around PV installations helping to reduce the amount of gas and electricity expected to be used and which will also reduce carbon emissions?

The current financial strategy has been prudent in terms of potential future cost increases in energy. Work is ongoing in terms of looking at wider CCS procurement frameworks for energy and how this can be stabilised in the medium to long term. Work in solar PV on buildings will show cost reductions going forwards, as well as energy improvement works which will reduce the volume of energy used.

- There has been an unexpected increase in costs following the changing legislation around XL Bullies. There was a one-off contribution from DEFRA for 2024/25. To what degree will this cost be covered in 2025/26 and in future years?

There are no further commitments to this funding from DEFRA, and costs will need to be met from within the overall settlement given to the Home Office. £400,000 per year is built into the financial plan for future years for this increase in costs. WMP will continue to lobby through the PCC's Treasury Society, as well as through the NPCC Finance Committee.

- Is there any indication that other forces will be failing to meet their neighbourhood increase complement this year, as part of the government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee. Could WMP increase police officer numbers to contribute to meeting this target if called upon to do so?

There is no detail of individual forces who may not be meeting targets, but the Home Office has asked a number of forces who have met uplift targets if they are able to increase further. The Chief Constable has responded positively to the ability for WMP to take advantage of a reduction in numbers that may occur from other forces and has formally confirmed this to the Home Office. There is a clear caveat that any additional numbers would need to come with the appropriate associated funding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a proposal to test the budget during the budget setting period by increasing PCSO numbers back to 300, which would still be below 2010 levels. Is this a realistic prospect financially?</li> </ul> <p>300 PCSOs have been factored into next year, and into the current year. Close working with the Home Office is essential, in case there are any further opportunities for neighbourhood policing funding which can be directed to PCSOs. 20 additional PCSOs recruited earlier this year are included in this 300.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand is increasing due to improved outcome rates in both policing and the Criminal Justice System. Bringing offenders to justice is a clear objective of the Police and Crime Plan. What costs have increased due to improved outcome rates?</li> </ul> <p>These outcome rates are a result of positive additional action, which has required investment in investigations and custody services. Ensuring the correct funding for increased levels of activity will be picked up through the priority-based budgeting exercise.</p> <p>The PCC concluded this item, highlighting that he has a statutory duty to ensure the maintenance of West Midlands Police, and to ensure that the police force is efficient and effective. The Police and Crime Plan states that ensuring value for taxpayer money is at the heart of the PCC's role. The Chief Constable will be held to account to ensure that every pound that is spent is focused on preventing and tackling crime; promoting community safety; and keeping the people and communities of the West Midlands safe and secure. Performance targets will measure progress towards delivering the plan, and the PCC will work with the Chief Constable to set a medium-term financial plan and an annual budget, making best use of available funding. The PCC will ensure that there is effective treasury management, cash-flow is optimised, and liquidity and capital requirements are efficiently managed to support delivery of the plan and the long-term financial stability of WMP.</p>
9	<p><b>CLOSE</b> Next meeting: 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025</p>