



Agenda Item 11b

**JOINT AUDIT COMMITTEE
11 December 2025**

Risk Management Update (Strategic)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide members of the committee with oversight of the strategic risks.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 With risk maturity, understanding and confidence improving in West Midlands Police, the Risk Team have introduced strategic risks as a governance level in addition to corporate and departmental.

2.2 Strategic risks represent our potentially longer-term chronic risks and may have larger and more widespread impacts for the force and our ability to achieve strategic objectives.

3 CURRENT OPEN STRATEGIC RISKS

FUNDING GRANTS	MEDIUM
<p><i>Ceasing or shortfalls in grant funding would mean that force would need to source funding from the core WMP budget or the activity in the area(s) may need to reduce or cease.</i></p> <p><i>This is a force strategic risk for all grants – please refer to tracker attached in documents.</i></p> <p><i>If values are agreed for the current year the risk remains for future years and each grant may have caveats in relation to the funding which we will need to work through on a case by case basis.</i></p>	

- 3.1. Tracker kept by finance to monitor any grants and funding required inclusive of unbudgeted grants. This is shared with the risk team and updates are provided quarterly throughout the year.
- 3.2. Known movements for next year and any grants that we've received funding confirmation for in 2025-26 are monitored through the tracker.
- 3.3. It's noted that the county lines and grip funding is being withdrawn for 2026-27, planning for this is underway through the Medium-Term Financial Plan and budget setting work. For county lines proposals exist for changing the size of the team to continue to address county lines but in a smaller scale should funding be withdrawn.

**MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION OR NON-FACTUAL REPORTING
WITHIN THE MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA****MEDIUM**

There is a risk of our communities trust and confidence in WMP being negatively impacted, heightened community tensions and potential social disruption (i.e. protests) fuelled by misinformation/disinformation. There is a further risk that comments left under such posts can fuel the spread of misinformation/disinformation. Comments may also constitute a criminal offence (i.e. racist) or should be challenged by the force – allowing posts to remain may then further negatively impact trust and confidence in WMP.

- 3.4. Corporate Communications have access to teams within Force Intelligence to be able to authenticate whether an image/video is fake and where a post has come from in the world so we can help mitigate any speculation/backlash with some clear facts.
- 3.5. This can be done within minutes by the Ill team and puts us in the best position to be able to address this issue. This would mean we are able to respond with authority quickly.
- 3.6. A draft hate crime on social media (comments/posts) trigger plan has been put together and is awaiting final sign off.

COMMUNITY TENSIONS AND POLITICS**LOW**

There is a risk of increased public protest and unrest, increased community tensions, reduced perception of public safety and impact on public trust and confidence in policing response to the highly sensitive and politicised events. There is a risk of increased demand on policing - changes in criminality, targeting of vulnerable groups and impact on hate crimes/incidents and safety, wellbeing and welfare of staff may be impacted.

- 3.7. Initially created under Operation Biotas in response to the summer riots of 2024. Significant work was completed for Op Biotas, with identified organisational learning captured.
- 3.8. When the tensions of the summer disorders subsided, the risk context and description were amended to reflect and capture wider current and future community tensions.
- 3.9. Current concerns focus on Op Slater (anti-migrant tension) and Palestine-Israel conflict and more recently the incident in Manchester synagogue. Corporate Communications have engaged with the public reinforcing the vital need to keep listening to communities of all faiths to understand how they are feeling, and what we can do to offer reassurance and support.
- 3.10. Intelligence is continually reviewed and fed through to operations.

NET ZERO AMBITION**MEDIUM**

Risk that WMP is unable to achieve Net Zero 2035 in line with its publicly stated ambitions, due to the capital investment requirements and in particular the cost of heat decarbonisation and building fabric improvements. The accelerated deployment of energy reduction projects and low carbon technologies required to achieve this ambition will also need dedicated resources and governance arrangements which are not currently in place.
Whilst there are no current requirements for the public sector in England to report progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions it is anticipated that this will change with Government mandating reporting in the future in order to ensure national targets are met.

- 3.11 Fleet Transition Work continues in this area. Consultants are finalising the structure and contents of the draft EV Fleet and Infrastructure (EVI) report for WMP.
- 3.12 The considerations within the report will include hydrogen and renewable fuels in a police context as part of the technology availability.
- 3.13 Energy Use continues to show a downward linear trend for the force which has been aided through a mixture of disposals of buildings as part of the Estates Strategy together with benefits of continued LED lighting schemes and solar PV being delivered. Further sites are being developed for installation of LED lighting and Solar PV with a paper being submitted to Finance Governance Board in December 2025 to seek funding to enable this.
- 3.14 From 2028 WMP electricity will be procured from 100% renewable sources and noted that Net Zero journey consists of decarbonising estate and fleet as optimally and efficiently as we can, at which point WMP will look at opportunities to offset the remaining carbon through investment and certification with local and national offsetting schemes through a mix of nature, technology, emerging and community-based solutions.
- 3.15 The transition of fleet over to EV in the coming years will play a major role in decarbonisation coupled with national grid's investment in the power network to provide cleaner production of electricity subsequently used by WMP.
- 3.16 Engagement continues via the intranet, Greener WMP teams channel, Environmental Strategy Working Group and Central Communications to maintain the good practice messages and encourage questions/comments from staff.

INTERNAL ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) INFRASTRUCTURE AND ULTRA LOW EMISSION VEHICLE (ULEV) STRATEGY FOR FUTURE FLEET TRANSITION	MEDIUM
<p><i>Phase out internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles by 2035 and shift to EVs presents a risk for our fleet management strategy, as the current fleet consists of 1884 vehicles of which 80 are full EVs.</i></p> <p><i>Presently, the infrastructure to support an all-EV fleet internally is inadequate.</i></p> <p><i>The market for Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will include options beyond just electric vehicles, including hydrogen and other alternatives, we cannot assume that the EV infrastructure will be the sole future solution for fleet needs.</i></p>	

- 3.17. To address this challenge, we have commissioned a consultant to assess our estate and fleet composition. This consultancy will provide critical insights into the infrastructure needed to support a transition to net-zero emissions for our fleet.
- 3.18. Conclusion of current decarbonisation consultation is expected in Oct - Dec 25 when risk will be better understood.
- 3.19. Linked to Net Zero Strategic ambition and update as above.

END TO END ENCRYPTION	MEDIUM
<p><i>WMP may not have the capability, ability or technology to intercept or access data sent via End-to-End-Encryption. This may present risks to our investigations and evidence build to secure prosecutions and outcomes for offences which may include terrorism, serious organised crime and CSEA.</i></p>	

This may also present a risk to our ability to intercept communications and data to prevent offences and incidents from occurring.

- 3.20. This risk has been reviewed with the SME in Information Technology and Digital.
- 3.21. The technology is not available to achieve this (i.e. breaking end-to-end encryption) hence why the UK gov formally ask of Apple (and other tech companies) to hand over such data at request. Therefore, it is not possible to take/mitigate this risk further, the technology does not exist which WMP could procure.
- 3.22. The risk is currently pending closure.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

MEDIUM

*AI creation of increasingly convincing disinformation, deepfakes and generated content (i.e. fraud, CSEA material)
Legal challenges in relation to accountability for any harm caused by AI systems either by generated content or bias/outputs.
Over reliance on AI, impact on core service delivery should we become dependent on AI to complete tasks.
AI producing biased or harmful outputs, as well as unfair decisions being made supported by AI
AI outputs can be skewed by 'data poisoning', where incorrect entries are included in data sets which trains the AI to produce inaccurate outputs, this can also be harnessed by malicious actors through cyber-attacks.
Rapid developments in AI capability which could see safety systems and security measures unable to maintain the same pace in terms of cyber-attacks or the ability of our technology to investigate AI related offences
Skillsets of officers and staff in AI - harnessing its use in WMP, our ability to investigate offences and our trainers to upskill colleagues*

- 3.23 Following the discussions at the last Joint Audit Committee, the risk team are currently working with appropriate owners to split this risk into Artificial Intelligence (AI) looking at Criminality and investigations and WMP adoption and use of AI internally.
- 3.24 For WMP the adoption and use of AI tools in force is acknowledged, and measures have been put into place such as limiting access in force to AI systems, until policies around use can be drawn up.

COURT STRAIN AND INFRASTRUCTURE

MEDIUM

****NATIONAL RISK/ISSUE****
The consequences of the current court strain may have/ having a potential negative impact on the force in terms of performance, offender management, securing justice, outcomes as well as dissatisfaction, trust and confidence and our service to the public.
Detainees remanded to court are being kept in police cells for longer than necessary due to the lack of cell space in the West Midlands remand courts, largely at Wolverhampton Magistrates and Birmingham Magistrates. This results in custody staff looking after these detainees for longer and reduces the police cell availability. Depending on the police demand, the courts then cannot accept that demand and so police are left with detainees.

- 3.25. Title for Criminal Justice Strain changed to current title to reflect the risk clearly.

- 3.26. Work continues with HMCTS to understand and improve throughflow at court. Prisoner volumes remain elevated, as do remand numbers, placing further pressure on court capacity.
- 3.27. Joint WMP and HMCTS working to continue.

CYBER SECURITY	MEDIUM
<i>Failure or breach of some or all of the force IT&D hardware or systems.</i>	

- 3.28 Cyber awareness training is in place, however a recent drill in force highlighted need for awareness. Nearly 1,500 colleagues did the correct thing by reporting the email and deleted it without clicking on links, however there were some that did select the link.
- 3.29 There are no known current incidents to date or breaches of WMP. All preventative measures are in place.

4 CLOSED RISKS

In the last quarter, three risks have been closed.

RELIANCE ON GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS	LOW
<i>Supply shortages due to unexpected disruptions which may impact or cease essential services.</i>	
<i>Cost increases and inflation in prices</i>	
<i>Potential use of supply chains with unethical practices such as exploitation and environmental degradation in order to maintain supply and essential services</i>	

- 4.1. This is a chronic risk for WMP, however we have surveyed our supply chain through questionnaires, and no issues have been raised.
- 4.2. Blue light commercial sends out scanning information to inform the force in relation to potential issues, and the correct governance structures are in place for the force to address these issues. The risk had been in a period of monitoring and therefore agreed that the risk is closed within appetite.

POLICE POWERS- DISPROPORTIONALITY	MEDIUM
<i>Disproportionate use of police powers, such as stop and search, strip searches and use of force, contribute to the ongoing perception that not all communities are treated fairly.</i>	
<i>Sense of discrimination and bias felt by some Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities undermines the legitimacy, trust and confidence in policing</i>	
<i>Adultification bias where children from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities are perceived as being more 'streetwise', more 'grown up', less innocent and less vulnerable than other children.</i>	
<i>Complaints of discrimination being handled effectively first time in accordance with the revised IOPC guidelines.</i>	

There is a risk that WMP may have insufficient governance, oversight and performance arrangements over fraud. Additionally, there is a concern that WMP may not be doing enough to support victims in preventing fraud, including providing effective advice to its communities.

- 4.3 The above both risks have been closed since last reporting. This has been completed considering reducing duplication in force where HMICFRS PEEL activity and governance overlaps.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee to note the contents of the report and any associated appendices.
- 5.2 It is recommended that due to the long term nature of the strategic risks, that these are reported to JAC every 6 months due to potential limited changes on a quarterly basis.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS