

Minutes of: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 25 November 2025

Present: Councillor D Vernon (in the Chair)
Councillors J Southworth, M Rahimov, A Arif, T Pilkington,
D Green, T Rafiq, E Moss, C Birchmore and J Harris

Also in attendance: Kate Waterhouse Executive Director of Strategy and Transformation
Chris Woodhouse Strategic Partnership Manager
Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver Bury District Commander
Councillor S Walmsley Cabinet Member for Communities and Inclusion
Jacqui Dennis Monitoring Officer
Josh Ashworth Democratic Services
Rachel Everitt Head of Elections and Land Charges

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor G Marsden

OSC.70 APOLOGIES

Apologies are listed above

OSC.71 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC.72 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

OSC.73 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The following question was submitted in advance of the meeting by Councillor Bernstein

"Does the Cabinet member share my concerns in what I feel is inconsistent action from GMP in taking appropriate action to threatening behaviour from members of the public particularly with regards social media activity?"

Cllr Bernstein asked whether the Cabinet Member shared his concerns about inconsistent action by GMP in tackling threatening behaviour from the public, particularly on social media. In response, Cllr Walmsley acknowledged that victims are often reliant on individual officers and approaches can vary across areas. She stressed the importance of not relying on social media, encouraged members to block and report malicious content, and proposed a briefing for councillors on malicious communications. Cllr Vernon added that councillors need to actively engage in reporting incidents. Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver explained that social media is a national platform and all malicious communications are reviewed, with Operations Ford and Bridger leading in Bury where crimes are identified. She noted the challenges in assessing threat, harm and risk.

OSC.74 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.75 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

Councillor Walmsley cabinet member for communities and inclusion presented an overview of the circulated report, highlighting that Bury has one of the strongest Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) and emphasising the collaborative work that underpins its effectiveness.

Councillor Birchmore raised a question regarding drug and alcohol misuse. Councillor Walmsley referred to the response in the report and confirmed that the drug and alcohol action plan will be shared. Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver added that while drugs remain a key issue in Bury, intelligence around ketamine use in Radcliffe is limited.

Councillor Harris asked about knife crime. Kirsty Oliver reported a slight increase, attributing this to improved productivity rather than a rise in incidents. She noted ongoing work on independent scrutiny, including a survey of 85 members, and confirmed that a video on stop searches will be shared.

Councillor Green raised concerns about cannabis use in pubs, cafés, and country parks, noting residents' frustration with enforcement. Kirsty Oliver explained that cannabis is not currently a policing priority and outlined the THRIVE risk assessment process used when calls are made. She highlighted discussions with the Deputy Mayor about improving intelligence gathering and online reporting.

Chris Woodhouse suggested cumulative case analysis to strengthen intelligence-led resource allocation. Councillor Rahimov queried trends in domestic abuse and child criminal exploitation and whether these were linked to drug-related crimes. Chris explained that data recording methods and safeguarding models influence figures and committed to providing additional trend information and specific numbers in future reports.

Councillor Birchmore asked about seasonal peaks in domestic abuse. Councillor Walmsley highlighted awareness campaigns such as White Ribbon and the "Let's Stand Together" alliance, stressing that engagement should be year-round. Funding streams were discussed, with the alliance fund complementing government strategies.

Councillor Vernon sought clarification on Domestic Abuse Protection Orders. Kirsty Oliver explained that these orders can be issued regardless of whether the offender is present and are an effective tool for victim protection, though they create a significant workload. Councillor Walmsley outlined the council's support for victims through Greater Manchester Victim Services, community cafés, and trauma-informed approaches.

Councillor Green raised concerns about licensing, illegal tobacco, and vapes. Councillor Walmsley confirmed GMP works closely with the licensing committee and has refused applications where necessary. Kirsty Oliver added that intelligence sharing continues and highlighted links to organised crime and money laundering, with ongoing operations and partnership work.

Councillor Southworth raised safety concerns at the BEE Network interchange, particularly for women and girls. Councillor Walmsley agreed, noting that evenings can feel intimidating and stressed the importance of involving women, girls, and young people in the consultation for the new interchange. Increased security measures will be included in the consultation. Kirsty

Oliver confirmed that safety for women and girls is a priority and was a factor in appointing a Chief Superintendent for Greater Manchester.

Councillor Southworth supported the need for children and young people to be involved in the consultation. Councillor Moss referred to a recent attack and asked about measures to make the Jewish community feel safer. Kirsty Oliver explained that official communications were led by Manchester and focused on reassurance, with outreach to community leaders and coordination through the recovery group. She emphasised that community cohesion will remain a focus, with efforts to build confidence and ensure voices are heard.

Councillor Arif asked about the outcome of warrants related to illegal e-bike use on Bolton Street in Radcliffe. Kirsty Oliver did not have the details but confirmed she would follow up and noted that Operation Hurricane is the GMP lead on this issue.

Councillor Harris thanked the police for their efforts and expressed concern that the Jewish community feels more fearful than ever. Councillor Walmsley highlighted the importance of hate crime reporting and addressing disparities in data sharing. She stressed the need for trusted reporting channels and collaboration with the Community Security Trust (CST) to ensure all incidents are recorded.

The discussion returned to the TravelSafe app, which routes reports through to transport operators. Councillor Vernon praised the strong partnership between the council and GMP and asked if further support was needed. Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver responded that Bury has a robust partnership and the focus for the next 12 months will be on strengthening cohesion and creating safer spaces. She noted that the partnership felt strong from the outset and continues to improve.

It Was Agreed:

- The update be noted
- Share the drug and alcohol action plan
- Chief Superintendent Kirsty Oliver be thanked for attending and supporting the update

OSC.76 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL PERFORMANCE DATA

Jacqui Dennis provided an update on the Ombudsman's annual report and the council's performance. She noted that in 2023/24 the council was in a poor position, which prompted the development of an improvement plan. Since then, significant progress has been made, and the council is now in a much stronger position with improved handling of complaints and responses to the Ombudsman.

Jacqui highlighted the figures for upheld complaints and financial awards: in 2023/24 there were 18 cases amounting to £12,900, whereas in 2024/25 there have been only 8 cases totaling £3,100. This demonstrates a clear improvement. She also confirmed that staff have received training from the Ombudsman on complaint handling and satisfactory remedies.

Cllr Moss commented that complaints are not always negative and that Ombudsman involvement is part of accountability. He acknowledged the improvement in performance and the strides made by the council. Jacqui confirmed that future reports will be improved for clarity and detail.

Cllr Green asked what steps are taken when complaints are upheld to ensure corrective actions are implemented. Jacqui explained that figures are reported to Governance and Assurance Boards, directors are made aware, and responses are signed off at the appropriate level.

Jacqui also addressed concerns around education and children's services, noting that previous high numbers were linked to SEN cases. With a new Head of Service and changes in approach, only two cases have been recorded this year, indicating significant improvement.

The discussion concluded with recognition of the progress made and a commitment to continue monitoring upheld complaints and refining reporting.

It Was Agreed:

- The update be noted

OSC.77 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR D VERNON
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.40 pm)