



**MIKE O'HARA**  
TEMPORARY ASSISTANT CHIEF CONSTABLE  
(OPERATIONS)

**POLICE HEADQUARTERS**  
Lloyd House  
PO Box 52  
Colmore Circus Queensway  
BIRMINGHAM  
West Midlands  
B4 6NQ

Direct Telephone: 0121 626 5483  
Switchboard: 101 ext. 801 6012

21 October 2022

**Mr Ashvin Patel**  
**West Midlands Hindu Forum**  
**6 Birmingham Road**  
**Walsall**  
**West Midlands**  
**WS1 2NA**

Dear Mr Patel,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 October 2022.

I was the Gold Commander who was responsible for leading the policing response to the community tensions we have experienced in the West Midlands, following on from similar issues experienced in Leicestershire.

As the Gold Commander, I have been clear within my Gold Strategy of the importance that West Midlands Police (WMP) must work in partnership with our communities and key partners to provide an effective and proportionate policing response to the planned protests. Also, in line with our core duties, balancing the rights of those wishing to peacefully protest with those of local communities, minimising the risk of harm, disruption, crime and disorder.

A fundamental aspect of my strategic objectives has been to ensure that WMP has a robust approach to any criminal acts such as the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour which caused harassment, alarm or distress or crimes committed against someone because of their race, religion or beliefs.

Thank you for sharing your comments in relation to community members feeling reassured by our approach.

I can share with you that there have already been three arrests linked to the disorder in Smethwick, two suspects remain on police bail as the investigation continues and one suspect has been released with no further action.

The investigation is being conducted by a dedicated team of investigators who are reviewing numerous hours of Body Worn Video and CCTV footage. Post-incident investigations involving visual evidence like this are often a lengthy process. However, I am satisfied that this will ensure that WMP seek to identify any individuals that have committed offences during the disorder.

In addition to the investigation, we have intelligence teams who are continually monitoring and assessing the sentiment around any further tensions, ensuring that WMP are well-informed to shape our response as necessary.

Individual Neighbourhood Policing Units will then manage their approach as a result of this intelligence. I understand that specifically within Sandwell there is a detailed patrol strategy where dedicated officers have been allocated on every late shift to patrol relevant establishments throughout the Diwali celebrations. They also have regular contact with the Independent Advisory Group Chair and 'Faithfull Friends' group of religious leaders.

The longer-term policing response to this is now being overseen by ACC Matt Ward, who is responsible for leading the Local Policing portfolio. I have shared your letter with him and understand that he will also be contacting you shortly.

Finally, may I take the opportunity to wish you a Happy Diwali and that you have a bright and wonderful celebration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M O'Hara', written in a cursive style.

**Mike O'Hara**  
**Temporary Assistant Chief Constable**  
**Operations**