

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2007

Review of Policing

1. Sir Ronnie Flanagan, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, has published his interim report on The Review of Policing, which examines four key areas:
 - how to reduce bureaucracy and promote better business processes;
 - how to sustain and improve the excellent progress that has been made on neighbourhood policing;
 - how to ensure the public are at the heart of local policing priorities by improving local involvement and accountability; and
 - how the police service can manage its resources effectively to meet the tough challenges ahead.

2. The interim report included early recommendations on addressing reducing bureaucracy, neighbourhood policing, improving local accountability and managing resources. These will be reported on at a later date and attached as an appendix are the report's interim recommendations.

Openings

3. The Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Jacqui Smith MP, opened the new West Mercia Constabulary Protective Services facility in August 2007 and Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Herefordshire, Sir Thomas Dunne opened the new Leominster Police Station on 4 September 2007.

Community Engagement Strategy

4. The Police Authority and Chief Constable have agreed a Joint Community Engagement Strategy, which aims to improve West Mercia's Communities' levels of confidence regarding local policing and providing reassurance.

5. The strategy sets out to clarify:
 - i) the respective roles and responsibilities of the Constabulary and the Police Authority with respect to consultation and community engagement;
 - ii) fulfil the statutory duties around communicating, consulting and engaging with communities; and
 - iii) support the Three Year Strategy '4000+ an even better place'.

6. As part of the development of the Strategy the Authority will be consulting on proposals for future community engagement arrangements, including partnership working and in particular with regard to:
 - Police/Community Consultative Groups (PCCGs)

- Policing Boards
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Local Strategic Partnerships

7. The aim of these specific proposals will be to streamline the Authority's community engagement and partnership arrangements by working towards a more joined up approach in order to -

- Provide greater clarity and increase people's understanding of how they can get involved and influence policing in their area and how opinions have been taken into account.
- Make more effective use of the information gained to inform improvements in policing and community safety.
- Make the best use of Police and Police Authority time.

Force Campaigns

8. During the course of a year the Constabulary runs a series of local publicity campaigns particularly aimed at tackling crime, promoting community safety, improving public satisfaction and confidence. On-going campaigns include:

- Knock Knock Distraction Burglary and Doorstep Crime
- Seven Deadly Sins – Road Safety
- Summer Drink Drive campaign
- Garden Safety Initiative

9. Campaigns being developed include:

- Safe and Secure – Home Security
- 4000+ Safer Communities Campaign
- Pilot communications projects in divisions.

Performance

10. The Police Authority has received a report on the Constabulary's performance during the first quarter of the year (April to June 2007).

11. In relation to local policing the force is achieving an 'Excellent' grading with 90% of Local Policing Area teams having three or more priorities set in the period and more than 80% of police-only actions being completed within the target time.

12. Both Police Officer and Police Staff sickness levels have improved on last year and are on target.

13. Full details of the Constabulary performance can be found on the Police Authority's website.

HMIC Baseline Assessment

14. The Authority has received an update on the progress made in relation to the Areas for Improvement identified in the HMIC Baseline Assessment 2005/06:

Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

- Counselling for public protection officers was now in place.

Human Resources Management

- Force Sickness Levels had improved and were ahead of target for April and May. Long term sickness had been much reduced.
- Health Checks were in the process of being implemented.
- All police officers and staff were to be offered flu vaccinations this year.
- Occupational Health Department now had dedicated advisors in each division.
- Fitness assessments for Community Support Officers consisted of testing for fitness for patrol.
- A Time Recording system was being implemented across the Force on a phased basis.
- A full staff survey would be run in the autumn led by Organisational Development Unit.

Training & Development

- Evaluation of training and follow-up actions had now been embedded.
- A comprehensive monthly performance report was submitted to Joint Chairs of Training Panels and the Police Authority's Training Liaison Member monitored this.
- Plans for a customer survey of training were being developed.
- A formal staff survey was to be conducted of training and development staff.
- Diversity Impact Assessments were now in place for all new training under development, and were being extended to existing training to be completed by the end of 2007.
- All departments had been surveyed to ensure that all data was incorporated into the costed annual training plan.
- Waiting lists for training were now subject to regular performance reviews.

Recruitment

15. The overall police officer strength as at 1 July was 2458, a record number of police officers in West Mercia. The force had recruited 15 transferees in the current year, with a further 53 applications being processed.

16. The West Mercia target for Black Minority Ethnic (BME) officers was 2% and currently stood at 1.6%. It was expected that the target would be met in the next three to four years. There was no national target for women officers, however the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the British Association of Women

Police (BAWP) had set a 35% target. West Mercia had over 25% women officers and expected to meet the 35% target in eight to nine years.

17. The Authority noted that the Force's policy of Positive Action in recruitment through a Positive Action Team had proved successful. The continued use of Positive Action to achieve a workforce representatives of West Mercia's communities was endorsed, whilst noting the national debate on the use of Affirmative Action, which appeared more appropriate to metropolitan areas.

Code of Conduct

18. The Police Authority has adopted a new Code of Conduct, which follows the national model in so much as it is applicable to Police Authorities, and includes the discretionary provision to give a limited right to make representations (but not vote) on issues where a prejudicial interest arises. A protocol underlining the importance of confidentiality has also been adopted.

Risk Management

19. The Authority has agreed a Risk Register for 2007/08, which summarises the main risks and controls measures in place to mitigate against them. The Authority has also reviewed the Constabulary's approach to risk management and endorsed the Strategic Risk Management Policy and Procedures. This will be monitored by the Authority's Audit Committee.

Audit

20. The Police Authority will have new external auditors from September 2007 with the District Auditor replacing PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), who were thanked for their contribution to the success of the Constabulary and Police Authority.

21. PwC had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the 2006/07 financial statements. There were no unadjusted misstatements to bring to the Authority's attention. No material weaknesses had been identified in the Authority's accounting and internal control systems during the audit. The provisional assessment under the Police Use of Resources Evaluation (PURE) indicated that the Authority was performing "well" or "strongly" in all areas that had been assessed to date. These scores were subject to the final national quality assurance arrangements.

22. PwC had undertaken a review of fraud and abuse in relation to Information and Computer Technology (ICT). They found that the majority of control measures recommended as good practice by the Audit Commission were in place and operating as intended. PwC concluded that, in general, the risks of ICT fraud and abuse were being well managed by the Force. The Police Authority had responded positively to the Action Plan put forward to further improve and strengthen the Force's policies and procedures in some areas.

23. The final piece of work PwC would complete was in relation to the Authority's compliance with good practice in terms of the "delivering good governance", which would be reported later in the year.

Sources of Income

24. The Authority has reviewed the sources of income available to West Mercia and has endorsed the charges made for certain services in accordance with national guidelines.

25. In 2007/08 a total of £17.215m will be received from specific project grants, which include those emanating from the Crime Fighting Fund, "Rule 2" (formerly Rural, DNA and Reform grants), Safety Camera Partnership and for Community Support Officers.

26. Reimbursements are received in relation to secondments, contributions (eg towards the costs of CSOs) and mutual aid, where the Constabulary assists other forces, particularly the Metropolitan Police in response to national and international incidents.

27. Income is also derived from rents etc., charging for special duties (e.g. public events on private property such as sporting events and county shows), training courses, accommodation, conferences, Criminal Record Bureau checks, Firearms Certificate and Road Traffic Collision Reports and similar. There are also other smaller sources of income including escorting of abnormal loads, boarding up premises costs, witness expenses recovered and the managed Vehicle Recovery Scheme.

Independent Custody Visiting

28. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme provides an independent check on people held in police custody. The visitors are drawn from the local community and monitor the custody units at Hereford, Kidderminster, Redditch, Shrewsbury, Telford (Malinsgate) and Worcester by visiting them at least once a week and reporting their findings back to the Police Authority.

29. 2006/07 was another successful year for the Scheme with a total of 315 visits completed. 1230 people were in custody at the time of the visits of which 788 were offered a visit; 639 accepting (81%). Reasons for detainees not being offered a visit included being interviewed, in consultation with their solicitor, asleep or visitors being advised not to see the detainee for health and safety reasons. The Shropshire Panel intends to consider piloting a new system of self-introduction to detainees to seek to increase the number of people who consent to a visit.

30. No major problems emerged from the visits carried out in the year. In nearly a third of the visits recorded the visitors had no issues to raise which reflects well on the custody staff who often have to work in difficult circumstances. The highest number of comments related to temperature and medical attention and there were an increasing number of comments relating to language difficulties experienced by detainees or where an interpreter was required.

31. Where issues were raised these were either rectified as soon as possible, dealt with in correspondence with the Divisional Police Liaison Officer or discussed at the Panel meetings.

32. Specific concerns remain from the Shropshire Panel regarding the lack of an exercise area at Shrewsbury for detainees who are held in custody for long periods.

33. Nine new visitors joined the Scheme during the year and there was one resignation. The total number of visitors in West Mercia is over 70 and whilst the Kidderminster and Redditch, Shropshire and Worcester Panels are at full strength applications from people living or working in Herefordshire are invited.

34. All visitors are given the opportunity of refresher training and three induction courses were arranged during the year for new visitors. In addition cultural awareness and diversity training was provided to scheme members and each of the four Area Panels was represented at the Independent Custody Visiting Association's Annual Conference held in Cambridge.

Further Information

Any person wishing to seek further information on the subject matter of this report should contact David Brierley or Ian Payne on Shrewsbury (01743) 344314.

Further information on the West Mercia Police Authority can also be found on the Internet at www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk.

Questions on the functions of the Police Authority

The Authority has nominated the following members to answer questions on the discharge of the functions of the Police Authority at meetings of the relevant councils:

Herefordshire Council	Mr B Hunt
Shropshire County Council	Mr M Kenny
Telford and Wrekin Council	Mr K Sahota
Worcestershire County Council	Mr E Sheldon

List of Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of the Police Authority) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda papers for the Annual Meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 25 September 2007.

**The Review of Policing
Sir Ronnie Flanagan
Summary of Recommendations**

REDUCING UNNECESSARY BUREAUCRACY

Recommendation 1:

The Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) must demonstrate clear national leadership on the issue of risk aversion and commit themselves to genuinely new ways of working to foster a culture in which officers and staff can rediscover their discretion to exercise professional judgement. This should find its first practical expression in a joint Compact between the tripartite relationship and the service to be delivered by the summer of 2008. (I see the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) as the primary body, which should support the ongoing delivery of this vital goal.)

Recommendation 2:

The Government should look again at the priority given to different offences in the new performance regime for the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and, in particular, the Public Service agreement targets for offences brought to justice so that more proportionate weight is given to the different levels of seriousness applied to offences.

Recommendation 3:

The Home Office should re-define violent crime to include only those crimes which actually cause physical injury or where the threat to inflict such injury is likely to frighten a reasonable person.

Recommendation 4:

There should be a non-party political but truly cross party debate to inform a revision of recorded crime statistics, particularly in the areas currently designated as violent crime. In this context, a closer examination of why international police colleagues do not record anything like the level of activity as 'violent crime' will be critical.

Recommendation 5:

ACPO should work with the NPIA to produce mandatory standard forms based on the minimum appropriate reporting requirements. This work should be completed by summer 2008 and forces should adopt them unless there are compelling local reasons for variation.

Recommendation 6:

I recommend that officials should consider whether it is possible to develop, as part of APACS, a set of business indicators for police activities which could show how effectively the police service works and act as benchmarks for good practice.

Recommendation 7:

The National Policing Board should carry out an urgent and fundamental review of the ADR to report by the end of the year. This should be delivered in conjunction with the Home Office's wider programme of data stream reduction which it is undertaking as part of the Government's programme to reduce bureaucracy on frontline public services.

Recommendation 8:

The Home Office should initiate a revision of activity based costing with stratified sampling by autumn 2008. The NPIA should carry out an investigation of the suitability of airwave to gather information on officers' daily activities by summer 2008.

Recommendation 9:

The review will give urgent consideration to how Stop and Account/Search can be better administered and the bureaucracy surrounding it significantly reduced. In doing so, I will consult widely (and as part of my existing equality impact assessment) both with key leaders and stakeholders from a diverse range of communities and from within the service.

Recommendation 10:

The principles of DGQP seem to show great promise in dealing with proportionality in case file building. ACPO and the (Crown Prosecution Service) CPS should jointly look to find ways of implementing these principles nationally as soon as possible, building on the early work of the two pilots.

Recommendation 11:

The Home Secretary, the Secretary of State for Justice and the Attorney General should urgently consider the creation of a shared target for the reduction of bureaucracy, shared by the CPS and the police. The target should have a clear expectation that the amount of time the police are dedicating to case preparation should be appropriately reduced through smarter ways of working and the identification and dissemination of best practice.

Recommendation 12:

Following completion of the pilot evaluation, urgent consideration should be given to rolling out virtual courts, both geographically and in terms of the categories of cases they can cover.

Recommendation 13:

As part of the next phase of the review, the MIPB should urgently identify the costs and benefits of rolling out mobile data on a service-wide basis and recommend an appropriate way forward for doing so.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

Recommendation 14:

CLG and the Home Office should work with ACPO, NPIA and APA, the voluntary and community sector, Local Government Association (LGA) and idea to draw up an Action Plan to integrate Neighbourhood Policing with Neighbourhood Management to be published at the end of the year (2007). A cross-departmental/multi-agency team should be created to deliver the Plan. I will return to this issue in my final report.

Recommendation 15:

The Home Office and CLG should give urgent consideration to establishing a pilot that will take place in 2008-09 on the pooling of budgets between local community safety partners. This would examine the benefits that can be delivered and the challenges of rolling it out more widely. I envisage these pilots as being complementary to, and more local than, LAAs.

Recommendation 16:

The Home Office and CLG should urgently review the existing evidence on the partnership benefits, which arise from embedding Neighbourhood Policing within a Neighbourhood Management approach in order to inform the forthcoming CSR. The review of evidence should work within the principles of the national improvement and Efficiency Strategy and build on current improvement architecture to drive forward improvement.

Recommendation 17:

APACS should give proper weight to Neighbourhood Policing outcomes such as partnership working, problem solving, community confidence and satisfaction, and how effectively Neighbourhood Policing teams address community concerns in addition to any measurements around crime reduction. Furthermore, APACS should continue to align with the new Local Government performance framework.

Recommendation 18:

The Home Office and NPIA should work with CLG to ensure that the single national indicator set includes measures on confidence and satisfaction that are applicable to Neighbourhood Policing. These are due to be finalised soon and I would encourage that this work takes place as a matter of priority.

Recommendation 19:

The National Policing Improvement Agency should review all of its training, learning and development to ensure that neighbourhood Policing and associated skills are firmly integrated within its overall programme by the end of April 2008.

Recommendation 20:

Chief Constables should ensure that future recruitment campaigns place a proper emphasis on neighbourhood Policing.

Recommendation 21:

Chief Constables should strive to ensure that those appointed to head BCUs, and appointed to other posts within and integral to neighbourhood Policing, should as far as possible remain in post for at least two years. This should be monitored both by HMIC and police authorities.

Recommendation 22:

NPIA's neighbourhood Policing Programme should investigate the feasibility of giving greater recognition to officers and staff who remain on neighbourhood Policing teams for a lengthy period of time.

Recommendation 23:

The Home Office should continue to ring-fence PCSO funding for 2008/9 to enable the embedding of their role within neighbourhood Policing teams.

Recommendation 24:

Chief Constables should ensure that the training commitment for PCSOs who successfully apply to become police officers should take into account previous training they have already been given as well as the knowledge and skills they have acquired as a PCSO. Successful candidates could return more speedily to a neighbourhood Policing role and this could be achieved more quickly with a reduced training commitment.

Recommendation 25:

The Home Office with the NPIA should consider opportunities for developing the role of the PCSO and should specifically consider broader opportunities and flexible working options available within the police service. This is an issue I will return to in my final report.

Recommendation 26:

The NPIA should research the feasibility of a volunteer PCSO scheme and report on its findings by Summer 2008.