

# **REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2008**

## ***Deputy Chief Constable***

1. The Chair reported that Mr David Shaw had been appointed Deputy Chief Constable following the appointment of Mr Ian Arundale as Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys Police. Mr Shaw was previously with West Midlands Police where he had been Assistant Chief Constable since December 2004.

## ***Membership***

2. The Police Authority welcomed Herefordshire Councillor Richard Smith as a new member of the Authority. Mr Smith succeeded Mr Keith Grumbley who resigned as a member of the Authority in June 2008.

## ***Green Paper – From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together***

3. The Home Office had published the Green Paper in July 2008 and the Authority had taken the opportunity to consult with over 1000 stakeholders/organisations in respect of its contents.

4. In its response the Police Authority welcomed much in the Green Paper, particularly the -

- a) Commitment to reduce bureaucracy.
- b) Simplified target setting.
- c) Continued emphasis on public satisfaction and confidence and on local police engagement through Police Community Support Officers and local 'neighbourhood' policing teams.

5. However, the Police Authority had a number of concerns and a summary of the response to the Home Office is shown below (full copy available from the Chief Executive's office):

- 1 *"We consider the proposals, both in their broad sweep and in some of the detailed provisions, would give effect to a profound change in the constitutional balance of policing. Any one of the proposed changes could have unforeseen consequences; taken collectively, the outcome could be very different from that intended.*
- 2 *Policing occupies a singularly vital position in our constitutional and social fabric. It has benefited from being independent in its operational conduct and balanced in its response to political and community pressures. We need to be very clear to identify issues the Government wants to address and be sure that the proposed remedies address the perceived deficiencies.*

3 *We understand the issues to be:-*

- *delivering for the public and driving up confidence;*
- *open and robust performance management;*
- *improvements in leadership, systems, recording processes and the reduction of bureaucracy;*
- *appropriate standardisation.*

*We support these aims but cannot always support the proposed remedies.*

*In particular, we do not accept that radical changes to the accountability structures directly address confidence. We wholly support a locally focussed policing pledge. We wholly support the provision of understandable local information and strong public engagement through local policing teams, PACT (Partners and Communities Together) and survey processes. But we question whether there is a significant democratic deficit. Nor do we see the public wanting more complex accountability structures – rather, they want ever-improving policing services.*

4 *Direct election to Police Authorities carries very significant risks. It would also be a costly diversion from the continuing improvement in policing which the existing structures already deliver.*

5 *Public confidence can and is being improved by a range of measures, not least neighbourhood policing and customer focus initiatives. These have already made a difference but need further time to bed in. They can be strengthened in their delivery. It does not help to burden them with yet more complex accountability structures. We do not accept that greater accountability equates to increased confidence and satisfaction.*

6 *We support appropriate mechanisms to hold all Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) partners to account but what is proposed focuses too much on the policing element alone. It is important that the Police Authority is seen to be the mechanism to hold the police to account. The attention given to Basic Command Unit ‘accountability’ being established not ‘with’, but ‘within’ local authority structures, could actually serve to weaken the existing comprehensive and holistic approach to policing. Proposals that emphasise the ‘local’ risk ignoring the strategic and the wider protective services issues. They could also impact upon deployment flexibility.*

7 *Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) should return to their delivery role and be focussed at officer (delivery) level, leaving partnership priority and resource allocation issues to the member-led LSPs, thus simplifying the local partnership scene and bringing greater clarity.*

8 *Public engagement on local policing issues is best addressed by our PACT processes. An additional local-based mechanism such as the ‘community call for action’ will only reduce clarity.*

9. *We do not agree that the existing processes are failing. Desired improvements can more effectively and more economically be delivered by fine adjustment rather than radical reform.*

10. *We do not consider the constitutional framework proposals will meet with public approval nor deliver any real improvement in public confidence. That is something that will be delivered by better customer focus and service delivery, information sharing and positive media reporting – not by accountability framework reforms”.*

### **Local Crime Statistics**

6. The Government’s crime cutting strategy ‘Cutting Crime: A New Partnership 2008-11’ contains a commitment to improve access to local crime information for the public. Specifically the strategy pledges to make local crime data available on a monthly basis to communities across the country.

7. West Mercia Constabulary ‘went live’ with the first set of data and commentary on its website ([www.westmercia.police.uk](http://www.westmercia.police.uk)) on 9 July 2008. The Constabulary is continuing to develop an impactful and sophisticated website, tailored to the needs of the diverse communities of West Mercia. Ultimately the site could include information broken down to ward or neighbourhood level, mapping, links to other partners and a facility to allow citizens to provide feedback by email.

### **Counter Terrorism Strategy (Contest)**

8. The Police Authority has received a progress report on the Constabulary’s strategy and delivery plan in respect of CONTEST, the Government’s counter terrorism strategy.

9. It was agreed that the Chair of the Police Authority should represent the Police Authority on the Constabulary’s Counter Terrorist Group (CONTEST). It was also agreed that the Chair, together with Colonel Tony Ward and Mr Peter Dunford, would represent the Authority on the Constabulary’s Counter Terrorist (PREVENT) Group.

10. As part of the development of the PREVENT strategy an event aimed at building partnerships with key stakeholders, in particular Local Authority Chief Executives etc., would be held in December 2008.

### **Constabulary Campaigns**

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

**Safe & Secure** – aims to reduce the fear of crime and provide reassurance.

*Safe & Secure Vulnerable Vehicle Pack* – Recorded crime figures indicate that vehicle crime has fallen overall by around a third (January – May 2008) in the five Local Policing Areas in Worcester where the Vehicle Pack has been trialled. These areas were selected because they had a high rate of vehicle crime. In partnership with the Division, a decision will be made on how to take the initiative forward. Trials also continue in Bromsgrove and Kidderminster.

*Safe & Secure Home Checks* – free, simple home security advice will be promoted and provided to elderly and vulnerable people. Agreement has now been reached that this trial will take place in Herefordshire. The Division has also started a *Vulnerable Home Pack* scheme - residents will be sent a letter and an advice pack if they have left their home at risk e.g.; open window.

A *Safe & Secure Home Security leaflet* is being developed.

**Knock Knock** – aims to reduce the potential for distraction burglaries. Following the relaunch in April - a 12 month communications / operations strategy is being put in place – this will include a *nominated neighbour scheme* initiative which will be launched in the autumn.

**Seven Deadly Sins** –aims to raise awareness of road safety issues, helping to achieve safer roads for all road users. The Seven Deadly sins relate to:

Motorcycle Safety	Illegal Vehicles
Speed	Seatbelt Safety
Drink and Drug Driving	Pedestrian and Cycle Safety
Poor Driving (including Mobile Phone Safety)	

Further details of the Constabulary's campaigns can be found on the Community Safety section of the website [www.westmercia.police.uk/home](http://www.westmercia.police.uk/home).

### ***Risk Management***

12. The Authority has agreed a Risk Register for 2008/09, which summarises the main risks and control measures in place to mitigate against them. The Authority has also reviewed the Constabulary's approach to risk management and is represented on the Force Strategic Risk Management Group by the Chair of the Audit Committee.

### ***Women's Network***

13. The Constabulary's Women's Network aims to provide support to women police officers and staff, helping them to meet their full potential and to work with others to progress diversity issues and to champion issues for women working in the organisation.

14. The Women's Network has also successfully promoted a pilot of a self-development and confidence course, 'Springboard', which was attended by 15 police officers and 15 police staff, with positive feedback.

### ***Memorial to PC Ricky Gray***

15. A sandstone memorial to PC Ricky Gray, who died in a shooting incident in 2007, has been placed in the Dingle in the Quarry Park, Shrewsbury. Standing three foot tall and carrying the West Mercia Constabulary crest the memorial was unveiled by his wife, Mrs Jenny Lee Gray, and Chief Constable Paul West, following a service in St. Chad's Church in September 2008.

16. In addition, to mark the first anniversary of his death, local police officers and staff took part in the Ricky Gray Memorial Football Match at Shrewsbury Town's football stadium. The event was open to the public and hundreds of local people also attended to pay their respects. More than £8,500 was raised for Mrs Gray's two chosen charities – the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and the Royal Star & Garter Homes for disabled ex-servicemen and women.

### ***Independent Custody Visiting***

17. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme provides an independent check on people held in police custody and the conditions in which they are kept. The visitors are drawn from the local community and during 2007/08 monitored the custody units at Hereford, Kidderminster, Leominster Redditch, Shrewsbury, Telford (Malinsgate) and Worcester by visiting them at least once a week and reporting their findings back to the Police Authority.

18. There were 1089 people in custody at the time of the visits of which 694 detainees could be visited. Out of that number 542 (78%) detainees were visited by Independent Custody Visitors. This compares to last year where 639 agreed to a visit (81%). Reasons why a detainee could not be visited included being in interview, asleep or for safety reasons, where a detainee was particularly violent.

19. No major problems emerged from the visits. Out of the 315 visits made the visitors had no need to record any comments/complaints on 81 occasions. The highest number of comments related to medical issues, drinks, toilet and washing facilities, language issues and requests to make a telephone call. Other comments included issues relating to drains, damaged plaster in cells and clinical waste. 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.

20. In September 2007 a new custody unit was opened at Leominster and the Herefordshire Panel have welcomed the much improved custody provision, which is both spacious and includes an exercise yard. All detainees in Herefordshire have been kept at Leominster since this date whilst the Hereford custody unit is refurbished.

21. There are over 60 Independent Custody Visitors in West Mercia and the Police Authority would welcome applications from people over the age of 18 who live or work in the area who are interested in joining this worthwhile voluntary role (PO Box 487, Shrewsbury, SY2 6WB). Training is provided and new entrants to the Scheme receive the support of experienced Visitors when initially undertaking the role.

22. All visitors are given the opportunity of refresher training and two 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 Staffordshire in November 2007.

## ***Members Appraisal and Remuneration Scheme***

23. As a result of a nationally produced report the Police Authority has updated its own scheme. The issue of appraisal of members would in future involve an independent input from the Chair of the Authority's Standards Committee. A full copy of the Scheme is available from the Authority's website.

### *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) 264690.

Further information on the West Mercia Police Authority can also be found on the Internet at [www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk](http://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 MBE

### *List of Background Papers*

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Chief Executive 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 23 September 2008.