

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2008

Introduction

1. The Chief Constable and his officers and staff were thanked for their excellent work during a busy Autumn for the Constabulary. At the time of the meeting the Authority was issuing consultation letters to over 1000 stakeholders as part of the process of setting the policing priorities and budget for 2009/10. In addition the Authority received updates on a number of key issues including the introduction of the Policing Pledge, Green Paper and the new 0300 non emergency contact number.

West Mercia Policing Pledge 2009

2. A new Policing Pledge that sets out clear standards of service for the public has been introduced. This was formally launched in West Mercia by the Home Secretary and Chief Constable over the New Year period and took place in Redditch.

3. The Pledge, which is being rolled out by police forces across the country, is a key part of the commitment to keeping communities safe from harm. There are ten elements to the Pledge and these fit into three core themes:

- Community Engagement and Consultation
- Contact Management and Response
- Victim, Witness and Customer Care

4. The Pledge is shown at Appendix 1.

Setting Priorities for the Policing Plan 2009/2010

5. The Police Authority and Chief Constable are in the process of developing the Policing Plan for 2009/2010. A consultation document has been published and circulated to over 1000 partners, business and community representatives.

6. They have been invited to attend one of two consultation evenings being held in the south of the Force area on 13 January 2009 at Hindlip Hall, Worcester and the north of the Force area on 14 January 2009 at the ProStar Stadium, Shrewsbury. The document is also available on the Authority's website (www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk).

7. The proposed aims and priorities are attached at Appendix 2.

8. The Police Authority will adopt the Joint Policing Plan for 2009-2012 at its meeting on 17 February 2009 and all responses to the consultation document will be taken into consideration.

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

9. The Government released its response to the Green Paper Consultation at the end of November 2008 and this included the intention to press ahead with proposals to directly elect the majority of police authority members. The Police Authority had indicated its opposition to these proposals as had the Association of Police Authorities.

10. In its response to the Green Paper the Police Authority had generally welcomed many of the proposals, whilst recognising that a number of the Government's proposals presented challenges, particularly in the tight financial environment. However, the proposal to introduce directly representatives was of real concern and the Authority agreed to press the case against the politicisation of policing.

Note: Following the Police Authority's meeting the Policing and Crime Bill was published on 18 December 2008 and included sections on Police Reform, Sexual Offences and Sex Establishments, Alcohol Misuse, Proceeds of Crime, Extradition and Aviation Security. The Home Secretary decided not to include the provision for direct elections to Police Authorities within the Bill, but instead believed it was time to 'pause and reflect' on the policy.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary(HMIC)

11. The Authority has received reports on the responses to the recommendations arising from following HMIC Reports:

- Major Crime and Serious and Organised Crime
- Neighbourhood Policing and Citizen Focus
- Leading from the Frontline

12. These would be considered in detail by the Constabulary and relevant Police Authority panels.

Audit Commission

13. The Authority has welcomed the scores for the Police Use of Resources (PURE) 2008 evaluation. The overall score was 4, which was the highest available. The score for Value for Money was for the third year running '4' and West Mercia is the only force in England and Wales to achieve this rating since this formal external process was introduced in 2005. This reflects the additional value for money ethos the Police Authority has established with the Constabulary.

14. The Government has indicated its intention to introduce Police Authority Inspections by the Audit Commission/HMIC from April 2009. However, West Mercia Police Authority undertook a voluntary inspection of Corporate Governance, which was conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2006 and has been repeated in 2008.

15. The Authority has received a rating of 4 Excellents and 2 Goods (previously 2 Excellents and 4 Goods). The report is available on the Authority's website. The Chair congratulated all involved in these excellent results.

New Non Emergency Telephone Number 0300 333 3000

16. Following public feedback and complaints about the costs of the 08457 number a new Non Emergency telephone number for West Mercia Constabulary has been introduced. This has been designed to be easier to remember and cheaper to call – 0300 333 3000.

17. Calls to this number cost the same as calls to 01 and 02 prefixed numbers and are included as part of any inclusive minutes or discount packages, in the same way as geographic calls. These rules apply to calls from any type of line including mobile, BT, other fixed line or payphone. The ultimate cost of the call will depend on the telephone contract the person is on as these vary from supplier to supplier. However, Ofcom Guidance to the Telephone industry sets the cost of 0300 numbers to the lowest possible level of charge. There is no commercial gain to West Mercia for adopting the new public number. The change has been made in order to make it easier for the public to contact the police and reflects the concerns expressed over the previous number's charging regime.

Workforce Composition

18. The Authority has received an update on Diversity and noted the overall workforce composition by gender and by ethnicity as at 1 April 2008 was:

- 2,061 members of the overall workforce were female (42.4%)
- 82 members of the overall workforce were from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) community (1.7%)
- 650 of police officers were female (which represents 26.1% and is well ahead of the national average of 21%).

19. The Authority noted the key challenges around progression for women and BME police officers, with common issues being a lack of confidence to put themselves forward and disinclination to move from specialist roles. The Authority has agreed that this should be closely monitored and the removal of barriers examined, through dialogue with the Internal Staff Support Networks.

20. It was noted that there were no BME officers above the role of Inspector and a mentoring scheme would be introduced in 2009, initially focussing on under-represented groups.

Combined Equalities Scheme

21. The Police Authority has published a Combined Equalities Scheme 2008-2011, which was developed in consultation with people and groups both within West Mercia and externally with the community, representative groups and partner organisations. This included the Independent Advisory Groups and the internal Staff Support Network.

22. The Scheme, which is available on the website, sets out how the Police Authority will promote and deliver equality through all the recognised strands of diversity, both within the organisation and externally with the community and partners and recognising the changing face of our communities and what that means in the local context.

Freedom of Information Scheme

23. The Police Authority adopted a new Freedom of Information Scheme with effect from 1 January 2009. The Scheme, which is based on the model approved by the Information Commissioner, sets out how information routinely made publicly available by the Police Authority can be accessed. The information includes details of the structure of the Authority, the role and statutory responsibilities, revenue budget estimates and annual Statement of Accounts, Strategic Plans and Local Policing Objectives, Inspection reports and policies and procedures.

Divisional Commanders - Changes

24. Following Chief Superintendent Guy Rutter's appointment as Head of Professional Standards, Chief Superintendent Andrew Rowsell has been promoted to Divisional Commander for the Shropshire Division.

25. Chief Superintendent Rod Reynolds announced his retirement as Divisional Commander for the South Worcestershire Division and will be succeeded by Chief Superintendent Jane Horwood.

Carbon Trust Standard

26. West Mercia Constabulary has been assessed as meeting the Carbon Trust Standard. This is awarded to organisations that demonstrate commitment to and achievement of carbon emissions reduction. The Chair congratulated the Estates Department on achieving this award.

Signed on behalf of the
West Mercia Police Authority

Paul Deneen JP DL
Chair

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.

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
Shropshire County Council
Telford and Wrekin Council
Worcestershire County Council

Mr B Hunt
Mr M Kenny
Mr K Sahota
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 16 December 2008.

West Mercia Policing Pledge 2009

“Community Engagement and Consultation

Our pledge is to:

- *Provide you with information on your Local Policing Team, who they are, where they are based, how to contact them and how to work with them.*
- *Provide opportunities for you to meet your Local Policing Team, partners and local people at monthly PACT (Partners and Communities Together) and community events (e.g. meetings, surgeries) to consult with you and agree your priorities.*
- *Provide monthly updates on progress with your agreed priorities, local crime, policing issues.*

This will be done through providing:

- *crime maps*
- *information on specific crimes*
- *what happened to those brought to justice*
- *what action we and our partners are taking to make your area safer*
- *information on how the Constabulary is performing*

Contact Management and Response

Our pledge is to:

- *Ensure your Local Policing Team spend at least 80 per cent of their time visibly working in your area. They will not be taken away from their role more than is necessary and staff turnover will be minimised.*
- *Other police patrols will be in your area at times when you tell us you most need them.*
- *Respond to every message directed to your Local Policing Team within 24 hours and, where necessary, provide a more detailed response as soon as we can.*
- *Aim to answer 999 calls within 10 seconds. Deploy to emergencies immediately, giving you an estimated time of arrival – aiming to get there safely and as quickly as possible.*
- *Generally, this will be within 15 minutes in urban areas and within 20 minutes in rural areas.*
- *Answer all non emergency calls promptly. If attendance is needed, we will send a patrol giving you an estimated time of arrival.*
- *Aim to be with you within 60 minutes if you are particularly vulnerable or upset or calling about an issue which has been agreed with your community to be a critical PACT priority.*
- *If prompt attendance is not required, we will make an appointment to see you within 48 hours at a time that is convenient to you.*
- *If attendance by the Police is not necessary, we will give you advice on who can help and answer your questions.*

Victim, Witness and Customer Care

Our pledge is to:

- *Treat you fairly with dignity and respect.*
- *Ensure fair access to our services when it is reasonable and suitable for you.*
- *Agree with you, if you have been a victim of crime, how often you would like to be kept informed of progress in your case and for how long. You have the right to be kept informed at least every month, if you wish, and for as long as is reasonable.*
- *Acknowledge any dissatisfaction with the service you have received within 24 hours of reporting it to us.*
- *To help us fully resolve the matter, we will discuss with you how your concern will be handled, giving you an opportunity to talk to someone and agree with you what will be done and how quickly.*

We want to do our best for you. If we fail to meet the West Mercia Policing Pledge, we will explain why it has not been possible to deliver the high standards to which we aspire and you deserve.”

**WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY/WEST MERCIA CONSTABULARY
OUR PROPOSED AIMS AND PRIORITIES 2009-2012**

Intended Outcomes 2009-2012	Our Draft Strategic Aims 2009-2012	Our Draft Priorities for 2009-2010
The public have confidence in us and express satisfaction with our policing service	Strengthen the trust and confidence of all our communities and improve public satisfaction levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and respond to issues of local concern. • Increase our accessibility to the public through improved communications and the availability of local crime information • Endeavour to deliver our services to the standards and principles contained within the West Mercia Pledge
Level of crime and anti-social behaviour remain low	Protect vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the management of sex offenders and other offenders who pose a risk to the public and take a positive approach towards dealing with domestic abuse. • Use Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) in partnership with others to increase our effectiveness in protecting vulnerable people.
	Improve the service offered to victims and witnesses`	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully comply with the requirements of the national Victims Code and keep people informed on the progress of their case • Redesign our key processes around the needs of customers
	Tackle crime (especially serious crime) and anti-social behaviour	Focus on: (a) house burglary (b) robbery (c) serious violence (d) anti-social behaviour
	Ensure sufficient capability and capacity around major, serious and organised crime, and civil contingencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify further opportunities for collaboration and enhance force resilience through inter-operability • Develop our counter-terrorism (CONTEST) strategy • Maintain levels of operational

Our communities feel safe		<p>resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing effective response to civil emergencies and maintaining public order
	Bring offenders to justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners in the Local Criminal Justice Board to reduce re-offending • Improve our investigative progresses through the implementation of our RESULT! Programme
	Reduce the harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with other agencies focus on underage drinking • Focus on alcohol related violence • Disrupt the availability and supply of illegal drugs in our communities
	Reduce road casualties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With partners use targeted enforcement and education campaigns to reduce speeding and anti-social driving
	Use our resources efficiently and effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure, through a comprehensive business review process, that the organisation is appropriately resourced and configured • Ensure that appropriately skilled staff are available for key roles • Maximise the potential for IT and technological solutions to support the business • Identify opportunities for reducing the force's environmental impact