

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2003

Race and Diversity

1. The BBC Documentary 'The Secret Policeman' received considerable national publicity and highlighted racist attitudes among a number of police recruits in the district training centre based in Manchester. Following the programme the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) indicated their intention to undertake a formal investigation, using their powers under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.
2. The CRE has requested each Chief Constable and Police Authority to provide specific information on their Race Equality Schemes, their approaches to diversity training and their recruitment processes and initial recruit training. Replies have been sent. The Authority also requested a report from the Chief Constable and considered this at its last meeting together with a range of other matters relating to race and diversity issues.
3. Vetting of West Mercia's new recruits is conducted in accordance with National Standards. This involves screening for convictions, cautions, financial checks, employment references for the last five years, declaration of tattoos (which, in some cases, can be an indicator of extreme or inappropriate views and/or attitudes) and a complete Home Office security vetting.
4. The Assessment Centre for new recruits is designed to identify key behaviours and asks specific questions in relation to the communities that West Mercia Constabulary serves and the implications of policing diverse communities. The process involves an interview with a trained assessor who probes any areas of concern. All new staff also receive an input in relation to Diversity and Dignity and Respect in the workplace. These issues are further covered within other training programmes.
5. To further support the review process, members of the force's Independent Advisory Groups will be invited to observe the recruitment, selection and training process for probationary constables.
6. Internally, covert methods known as 'Integrity Testing' will be used where appropriate to examine the attitudes and behaviour of staff in cases where concerns have already been expressed.
7. The Authority endorsed the Chief Constable's report on the steps taken to ensure that all communities served by West Mercia Constabulary have confidence in the impartiality of police officers in upholding the law.

Stop and Search

8. The Authority has agreed to adopt a new force policy on Stop and Search, which places greater importance on monitoring the use of these powers.

9. Research has revealed that Stop and Search is a most effective power when used by police officers in a focused and intelligence-led manner. Also critical is the way officers carry out Stop and Search in that people expect to be treated fairly, with respect and be given a credible reason for the stop.

10. The Authority will be receiving regular reports on the application of the new policy and in particular where disproportionality in its use is identified this will be analysed. Where this reveals any discrimination or unfairness then remedial action will be taken. The effectiveness of the Policy will also be informed by advice from the Independent Advisory Groups.

11. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report recommended that Police Authorities should be given a duty to undertake publicity campaigns to ensure that the public is aware of Stop and Search provisions and the right to receive a record of any search they have experienced. The Association of Police Authorities has produced publicity and awareness raising literature entitled 'Know your Rights' and copies will be circulated to local organisations including the Race Equality Councils.

2002/2003 Audit Letter

12. The Authority's Auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers has produced its 2002/2003 Audit Letter in which it praises the strong performance culture throughout the organisation and highlights the continual strive for improvement.

13. The Auditors also comment that setting and managing budgets in the medium term will continue to be a very challenging process for the Authority, particularly in an environment where it is difficult to predict the future levels of Government funding for rural police authorities. In this context members are invited to ensure that the Authority's strong record of budgetary control and monitoring is continued. Members will also need to consider carefully the level of uncommitted reserves going forward to ensure that they remain at a level sufficient to cover these uncertainties.

Provisional Police Funding Settlement 2004/2005

14. The Government has announced the provisional financial settlement for 2004/2005. Each police authority in England and Wales has received a headline increase of 3.25%. It has, however, become apparent that there are some technical difficulties with the settlement in relation to the roll out of the new communications system Airwave and this is being addressed by the Home Office, Association of Police Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers. The outcome will be that some authorities might not benefit from the full 3.25% increase.

15. The provisional settlement is less than is required to maintain the current level of the police service in West Mercia. The cost of preserving current policy in 2004/2005 is £164.7 million and this would require an increase in the Council Tax of around £18.50 per year (35p per week), equivalent to a 15.4% increase in the Police precept.

16. The Authority has considered a report that outlines a number of options ranging from limiting the Council Tax increase to an inflation rate of 2.8% at the one end, maintaining the current policy and enhancing the level of service at the other. These

options will be worked up further during January and the Authority will meet to approve its budget for 2004/2005 on 17 February 2004. The views of the Community Policing Boards, Police/Community Consultative Groups and local business are being invited as part of the budget process.

17. The Authority also agreed to write to the Government to express its disappointment with the settlement given that it will place a disproportionate burden on Council Taxpayers, particularly those on fixed incomes such as pensioners, just to maintain current levels of policing.

Capital Programme 2003-2004

18. The following bids made under the Home Office's Premises Improvement Fund have been successful with the full £895,500 being awarded:

- Refurbishment schemes at Tenbury Wells Police Station and the Town Office, Shrewsbury
- New Police Station at Peterchurch, incorporating a pilot video booth project
- New front counter area at Redditch Police Station
- New Police Station on the present site at Evesham, freeing up the present building for an extension to the extremely successful Contact Centre and allowing more local partners to make use of these facilities.

19. The conditions of the grant require the Police Authority to match fund the Premises Improvement grant and to complete the projects before March 2005. These projects had been provisionally included in next year's programme and bringing them forward to take advantage of the Fund does not alter the Authority's priorities. The Authority, therefore, agreed to increase the Capital Programme 2003/2004 by £1,941,000 to accommodate these projects.

20. The Authority has also agreed to the inclusion in the Capital Programme of two Drugs Analyser Units (total cost £60,000), which will be financed through the Community Safety Partnerships in North Worcestershire.

21. The Division there is working with the three Community Safety Partnerships to tackle a range of drug related issues using "Ion track" Itemiser Instant Drugs Analyser Units (a non-invasive Narcotics Detection Device that gives test results in 10 seconds). The units are used as the basis for interventions including high profile preventative and interventional detection programmes.

22. By incorporating the use of these portable devices into a range of police operational settings, the ability to detect drug use/offences will be greatly enhanced and it is hoped will thereby further contribute to the reduction of drug related crime issues. The introduction of such devices would ensure that through the early identification of an individual's 'drug problem', interventional and treatment measures are introduced at an early stage offering increased opportunities to break the cycle of addiction.

23. This initiative will support the objectives of each Community Safety Partnership's Drug and Alcohol Plans and support the Divisional Policing Plan by assisting in the detection and prevention of drug related offences coupled with the ability, through early

identification of a problem, to ensure that help and treatment is made available where necessary.

Performance Update

24. The Authority has received an update on performance for the first six months of the year. Key points arising from the summary data are shown below:

Reduce Crime and Increase Detections

Total Crime:

- Crime in West Mercia Constabulary has risen by nearly 1% when compared to the same period last year. The growth is due to increases particularly in Violent Crime. Validation of crime has also changed since August 2003, which means that crimes are reaching full validation status more quickly.
- Detection Rates as previously measured have improved compared to the same period last year from 29.3% to 30.4%. This equates to an additional 735 detections.
- West Mercia does, however, need to monitor the breakdown of these detections as the new national sanctioned detection rate reduces this figure (22.2%). These relate to the offences where someone has been charged, summoned, cautioned, or the offence is taken into consideration. Reprimands and Final Warnings are also included.

Domestic Burglary:

- The number of domestic burglaries has reduced compared to the same period last year by 4%. There were 134 fewer domestic burglaries recorded.
- The detection rate in relation to this measure has improved slightly compared to the same period last year but is narrowly missing the target at this stage of the year. To have achieved the target an additional 18 detections would have been required.

Violent Crime And Robbery:

- The number of violent crimes recorded has increased by 1,004 (9%) compared to the same period last year. Violent Crime in a Public Place has increased the most (+19%) although this could reflect changes in recording practices. The number of robberies recorded has increased slightly compared to the same period last year. The level of robberies in the second half of 2003-04 has been falling.

Vehicle Crime:

- The number of vehicles crimes recorded is continuing to fall. West Mercia has consequently improved compared to last year and is achieving its year to date target.
- Detections on this measure remain relatively static on this indicator with a slightly lower detection rate recorded so far this year. An additional 93 detections were required to meet the target.

Class A Drugs:

- The number of offenders dealt with in relation to the Supply of Class A Drugs has improved compared to the same period last year. The target is being met at this stage of the year.

Racial Crime:

- The detection rate on this measure has significantly improved compared to the equivalent 6 months of last year. The target (which is more challenging than last years) has been narrowly missed (by 3 detections) at this stage of the year.

Provide Reassurance

Customer Satisfaction:

- Of the seven indicators relating to this area only one is achieving its target at this stage of the year. Improvements can be seen in relation to the satisfaction with arrival times, but five of the seven measures are showing a decrease in user satisfaction compared to the same period last year.

Sickness:

- The number of sick days taken per officer has improved significantly compared to the same period last year. By contrast the number of sick days taken per police staff employee has worsened on this indicator. The Authority is aware that the underlying level of long-term sickness always skews these statistics.

Operational Posts:

- The percentage of officers in operational posts has declined compared to the same period last year. This may reflect inappropriate recording of which officers have operational duties, especially amongst probationers.

Medical Retirements:

- The number medical retirements taken for both police officers and police staff has improved compared to last year and is meeting the target at this stage of the year.

Reducing Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour

Public Disorder:

- Public Disorder has increased by 9% in West Mercia over the first 6 months of this year. Much of this increase is in general nuisance and associated with Town Centres. The target has been missed at this stage of the year.

Reducing Road Casualties

Road Traffic Collision:

- There have been 4 fewer road traffic collisions recorded this year compared to the same period last year, although the number of fatalities has remained the same (42).

Annual Policing Plan

25. The Home Secretary published the National Policing Plan 2004-2007 in November 2003 and this will be taken into account in the Authority's Three-Year Strategic and Annual Policing Plan, which is currently being prepared. Draft copies of the Plan will be considered by the Community Policing Boards and Police/Community Consultative Groups early in the new year.

Be Somebody Campaign

26. As at 1st November 2003 the Constabulary's overall strength was 2388 police officers and this excluded the latest intake of 12 transferees during November, In addition future intakes of 11 transferees and 12 probationers would take place in December 2003.

Complaints and other Statistics

27. Between April and September 2003 130 complaints were received against the police compared to 166 in 2002.

28. In total 207 complaints have been finalised since April 2003, 13 of which were substantiated, 18 withdrawn, 52 informally resolved, dispensation was given for 58 and 66 were unsubstantiated.

29. Six police officers were seriously injured during the period 1 June to 31 August 2003 and a further 160 suffered minor injuries.

Best Value Review of Forensic Services

30. The Best Value Review of Forensic Services has been completed and the Authority has agreed the options report to take the service forward (a copy of which is available from the Clerk to the Police Authority). Forensic Services is seen as providing a crucial link between crime scenes and offenders, particularly in view of the increasing reliance of the criminal justice system for forensic evidence. Victims of crime were generally satisfied with the service received from Crime Scene Forensic Investigators who were described as sympathetic, fair, helpful and competent.

Police/Community Consultative Groups (PCCG)

31. The Annual Meeting of the Police/Community Consultative Groups was held in Hereford in November 2003 and a summary of the wide range of topics discussed during the year is shown below:

Anti-social Behaviour
Automatic Number Plate Recognition
Beat Managers
Call Management
Car Crime
CCTV
Child Safety Issues
Crime Figures
Crime Prevention
Crown Prosecution Service
Crucial Crew
Decriminalisation of local traffic offences
Disabled access
Door Security
Drugs and Related Crime
Drunkenness
Fire-fighters Industrial Action
Licensing
Neighbourhood Watch
Noise Project
Parking
Parish Officer
Partnership Working

Police Funding and Numbers of Officers
Police Divisional Boundaries
Police Patrols
Policing Plan
Post Office Watch
Publicity
Public Service Desk
Recruitment
Road Safety
Response Times
Shop Watch Scheme
Special Constables
Speed Cameras
Surgeries by Beat Officers
Traffic Enforcement
Travellers
Vagrants
Vehicle Crime
Vandalism
Volunteer Cadet Scheme
Violent Crime
Warden Schemes
Youth Liaison and Input

Community Support Officers

32. The first Community Support Officers (CSOs) were appointed in Hereford during 2002/2003 when the Home Office awarded a 100% grant. During 2003/2004 a further 45 CSOs will have been appointed with the Home Office awarding a 50% grant for 30 of those officers over a three-year period. The cost of the remaining 15 CSOs has been funded from budget savings arising from the Police Reform Programme requirement to reduce police overtime together with funding from the newly established BCU fund.

33. The deployment of the CSOs is shown below:

	2002/03	2003/04	Total
Shropshire		10	10
Telford and Wrekin		21	21
South Worcestershire		12	12
Herefordshire	10	2	12
	10	45	55

Community Support Accreditation Scheme

34. The Authority has been offered a grant of £20,000 by the Home Office to explore the potential for a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme in order to determine if non-police staff are fit and proper persons to exercise a limited range of police powers. If found to be suitable, these people will become Accredited Community Support Officers. This role, together with the other roles within the extended police family are primarily designed to increase public confidence and to provide further reassurance to citizens. The grant will be expended on an accredited protocol centred on the warden scheme at Wyre Forest. The Police Authority will monitor the results of this pilot.

Policing: Building Safer Communities Together

35. The Government has issued a major consultation on the future of police reform, which was launched on 4th November entitled '[Policing Building Safer Communities Together](#)'. The thinking behind this paper is to improve community engagement in policing; to create a police service which is more responsive and accountable to local communities; and better able to deal with serious and organised crime. The broad direction of reform is set out in the consultation paper but there is no blueprint in Whitehall for how this is to be achieved.

36. The comments sought by Government fall into four key areas and are outlined over the page:

<i>Community Engagement</i>	<i>Accountability</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information to local people • Develop a visible and accessible policing style • Increasing local voluntary involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability for providing neighbourhood policing • Enhancing the leadership role of Divisional Commander • Improving police response • Developing community advocates • Changing Police Authority and Partnership arrangements
<i>Operational Effectiveness</i>	<i>Service Modernisation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring sufficient capacity • Consider structural changes to Forces • Reviewing police powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewarding performance • A representative and properly skilled force • Improving police leadership

37. Before responding to the consultation paper West Mercia Police Authority is anxious to hear from its key stakeholders and comments have been sought from a range of bodies including local authorities, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Community Policing Boards, Police/Community Consultative Groups, Independent Advisory Groups and voluntary and business organisations in the areas. The Chief Constable has also been asked to respond to the consultation paper and is conducting as similar exercise with the Constabulary's key stakeholders.

Signed on behalf of the
West Mercia Police Authority

R M Forster
Chairman

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

List of Background Papers

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

Agenda papers for the Meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 9 December 2003.