

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2012

Three Year Strategic Plan and Annual Joint Policing Plan

1. The Authority has agreed the Three-Year Strategy and Policing Plan, which defines the purpose, aim, priorities and service standards for policing in West Mercia for the period 2012 – 2015. The Joint Policing Plan for 2012/13 is incorporated within the plan and gives particular emphasis to the planned outcomes and priorities for the forthcoming year. A copy of the plan is available on the Authority's website.

2. In developing the Policing Objectives the Police Authority had regard to issues raised at PACT (Partners and Communities Together) meetings, responses from the annual Crime and Safety Survey, feedback from victims of crime, Community Safety Partnerships, criminal justice partners' priorities and emerging national issues.

3. The consultation process included seeking the views of strategic partners, local communities and representative groups. A Webcast was held in January 2012 when a range of comments and questions on a diverse number of areas were raised and included:-

- A request that the Force engage more effectively with volunteers, including Neighbourhood Watch.
- Concerns on the possible impact of budget cuts on services and where further reductions will come from.
- Support and interest in the Alliance with Warwickshire.
- Questions as to how policing will evolve and be governed once a Police and Crime Commissioner was in place

4. The top three PACT priorities, from January to December 2011 were:

- speeding traffic
- cars parked illegally/inconveniently
- anti social behaviour

5. The Police Authority, in consultation with the Chief Constable have approved the following Policing Priorities for 2012/13 -

- Deliver an effective emergency response
- Protect people from crime and anti-social behaviour taking into account their needs and vulnerabilities
- Deliver a supportive and effective response to victims and witnesses taking into account their needs and vulnerabilities
- Plan and prepare to deliver our contribution to the Strategic Policing Requirement

- Proactively target organised crime groups, drug markets and individuals who cause most harm
- Disrupt the harm caused by alcohol misuse and intervene appropriately
- Work with partners to bring offenders to account and reduce re-offending
- Work with partners to prevent people being killed or seriously injured on our roads
- Plan and prepare to respond to any major and serious incidents
- Deliver an efficient and effective policing service which delivers value for money

6. The Police Authority will continue to monitor the performance of West Mercia Police against the Plan, including at a local level through the Territorial Policing Boards, prior to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012.

Budget 2012/2013

7. The Police Authority has set a net budget of £202.9 million for the financial year 2012/2013. There will be no increase in the policing element of the Council Tax and the payment will remain at the same level as two years ago. Accordingly, the payment for a Band D household remains at £178.72.

8. West Mercia Police continues to face a funding gap which is being spread over a number of years. The gap has arisen primarily because Government grants are being reduced significantly, whilst costs continue to increase. In the current financial year (2011/12) this gap was addressed by making real terms budget reductions of £9.8m. In 2012/13 further reductions of £11m will be made.

9. The Police Authority has projected its funding and costs over the next three years to 2015/16 and estimates that a further £17.1m of reductions will need to be made by 2016. This will mean that of the total required reductions of £37.9m, £20.8m has already been identified.

Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire

10. In June 2011 Warwickshire and West Mercia Police Authority agreed to develop an alliance between the two forces so that, working together, they could better deliver high quality, value for money policing services while meeting the challenge of reducing policing budgets by producing greater operational and organisational efficiencies in the years ahead.

11. Both forces have retained their Chief and Deputy Chief Constables who remain accountable to their respective police authorities. Force identities have also been retained, as will separate governance and accountability arrangements, policing budgets, assets and financial accounting arrangements. Each force will after November have their own Police and Crime Commissioner.

12. Within the Alliance structure the following shared command posts have been established:-

- Assistant Chief Constable (Local Policing)
- Assistant Chief Constable (Protective Services)
- Director of Enabling Services
- Director of Finance

13. The Authority has received an update on progress, which included on-going work on designing the directorates and the finalisation of the Collaboration Agreement.

Transition to Police and Crime and Commissioners

14. The Authority continues to prepare for the transition to Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012 and has noted the progress made by the local authorities in West Mercia in establishing a Police and Crime Panel for the area.

2010/11 Audit Letter

15. The Authority has welcomed a positive Audit Letter from the Audit Commission for the year 2010/11, which highlighted that the accounts were very well produced in compliance with International Financial Reporting Standards. The opinion was the first to be issued in the country for the year by the Commission, which was again a credit to the staff of the Finance Department.

16. The Auditor had issued an unqualified conclusion on Value for Money and had confirmed that proper arrangements were in place to secure financial resilience and for challenging how economy, efficiency and effectiveness would continue to be secured.

Public Service Counters in West Mercia

17. The Police Authority has approved changes to the opening times of public service counters at stations across the force area. The changes followed an extensive review of opening hours designed to provide a more consistent service across the whole area.

18. The alterations, which come into effect between March and May 2012, will not reduce the availability of police officers when required and are being introduced to provide service matched to demand and policing need, while seeking best value for money in the current economic climate.

19. The changes were agreed following extensive research, including recent footfall surveys at public service counters and analysis of the purpose behind each visit. Where opening hours have been reduced, alternative services are being provided including telephone links outside police stations and information stands providing crime prevention materials. West Mercia Police remain contactable at any time of the day or night through the 101 non-emergency number or by calling 999 in the case of emergency.

Firearms Licensing

20. The Authority has received a report on Firearms Licensing and noted that the backlog in issuing licenses was being addressed. Nationally, discussions were continuing regarding future funding issues and the costs of a licence.

Significant Cases and Court Results

21. The Police Authority has been updated on significant cases and court results where successful convictions were secured for a variety of offences including murder, sex offences, violent robbery, drugs and fraud.

Retirements

22. The Police Authority has placed on record its appreciation of the service given to West Mercia by three key and long standing officers who will be retiring at the end of March 2012. They were Mr Stephen Howarth, Director of Finance, Mr Ian Savage, Head of Information Management and Technology and Head of Personnel, Mr Jim Spence.

Signed on behalf of the
West Mercia Police Authority

Sheila Blagg
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) 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:

<i>Herefordshire Council</i>	<i>Mr S Bowen</i>
<i>Shropshire County Council</i>	<i>Mr M Wood</i>
<i>Telford and Wrekin Council</i>	<i>Mr K Austin</i>
<i>Worcestershire County Council</i>	<i>Mrs S Blagg</i>

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 meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 14 February 2012.