

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2006

Police Restructuring

1. The Police Authority has gratefully appreciated the unanimous support it has received from MPs and the county, district and unitary councils for retaining West Mercia Constabulary. In addition there has been much support from parish and town councils, other organisations and the public.
2. On 6 February 2006 the Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, invited the four police authorities in the West Midlands region (Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands) to agree to a voluntary merger to establish a new single Regional Force by 24 February 2006.
3. The four police authorities and forces met with the Home Secretary and expressed their continuing concern, which made it very unlikely that these would be resolved before the Home Secretary's deadline of 24 February. However, the other three authorities are still keen to pursue a single Regional Force, which would include West Mercia, once the assurances they have sought have been received.
4. At its meeting held on 14 February 2006 the West Mercia Police Authority unanimously rejected the Home Secretary's call for West Mercia Police Authority to voluntarily amalgamate into a single Regional Force.
5. The Police Authority remains committed to its view that an enhanced West Mercia Strategic Police Service is the best option for local people.
6. It is expected the Home Secretary will serve a notice of intent in early March to merge the four West Midlands forces. This action will initiate a four month period for objection. At the end of the objection period if he is still minded to force a regional merger an order will be laid before the House of Commons and the House of Lords before Parliament's summer recess.
7. The Authority has agreed to meet on 21 March 2006 to consider any notice issued by the Home Secretary and the options available to challenge any proposals.
8. The Authority's website at www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk provides further information on the restructuring proposals and options.

Budget 2006/2007

9. The Police Authority has set a budget of £176.8 million for the financial year 2006/2007. £112.0 million of this will be received from central government grants, with the balance coming from local Council Taxpayers. This year the Council Tax for a Band D property will be £150.24, an increase of 14p per week. The budget includes gross expenditure of £197.1 million, which is offset by income of £20.3 million.

10. In order to achieve the following improvements the investment in Community Support Officers and equipment will be funded in 2006/07 from the Government's Neighbourhood Policing Fund. An additional £2.9 million will be invested in Protective Services and this will be funded from within existing budgets, efficiency savings and through a fresh strategy of financing capital expenditure.

11. The following improvements in policing are planned for the year ahead.

Improving Local Policing Services

Local Policing Teams – a further 118 Community Support Officers will be recruited to help provide more responsive policing.

Investing in Protective Services

An additional 95 police posts are being created to provide an enhanced Criminal Intelligence Department (CID), to Counter Terrorism and for Civil Protection.

Investing in the Infrastructure and Equipment – Tools to do the Job.

New buildings; Modernised Equipment; better Call Handling and Responsiveness; implementation of the Quality of Service Commitment; and a new training and development programme for new recruits.

12. West Mercia Constabulary continues to be one of the lowest spenders per head of population of forces in England and Wales, whilst also being one of the top performers, and year on year has exceeded its target of 2% efficiency savings. The budget the Authority has set a budget will continue to provide an efficient and effective police service for the people of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire, whilst also making the police more accessible.

13. Although, once again West Mercia received the minimum level of grant from the Government the Authority and the Chief Constable have been able to limit the impact on the council tax payer by accessing grants, realigning existing budgets and developing a fresh strategy of financing capital.

14. The Police Authority is confident that the Chief Constable and his 4000+ officers and staff will not only be able to maintain their existing excellent performance but also deliver service improvements which will have a big impact on the quality of service the public receive.

Capital Programme

15. The Authority has agreed a Capital Programme of £16,874.4 million for 2006/2007.

16. New projects include a £1.859 million investment in Information Technology to improve performance, support neighbourhood policing and Protective

Services, improve internet communication with the public and enhance e-learning facilities.

17. The Programme also includes £0.500 million to provide works under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to ensure public access to West Mercia's buildings. By April 2006, 57% of buildings will be compliant and continued investment over the next three years will ensure that West Mercia becomes fully compliant with the current DDA legislation by 2008/09.

***West Mercia Three Year Strategic Plan and
Annual Joint Policing Plan 2006/07
Incorporating the Best Value Performance Plan***

18. The Authority has agreed the Three-Year Strategy and Policing Plan, which defines the purpose, aims, priorities and key principles for policing in West Mercia for the period 2006 – 2009. The Policing Plan for 2006/07 is incorporated within the plan and gives particular emphasis to the planned outcomes and priorities for the forthcoming year. It also includes the Best Value Performance Plan.
19. A summary of what will be delivered under the 'Four Better Outcomes' during 2006/2007 is shown below.

Reassurance

- *Following pilot schemes in the North Worcestershire Division expand the introduction of Local Policing Teams and ensure that every part of the Force area is served by a Local Police Officer who is known and accessible to the local community.*
- *Redesign the approach to local policing around electoral ward-based structures to ensure close links with locally elected councillors.*
- *Provide easily accessible information to improve public understanding of force policing priorities and the results achieved, and increase awareness of local policing teams.*
- *Develop improved community consultation arrangements to enable local communities to influence police priorities and actions to address them.*
- *Enhance levels of schools involvement so that young people enjoy a positive experience of the police.*
- *Implement the national minimum standards set out in the Quality of Service Commitment, including the national call handling standards by November 2006.*
- *Enhance victim care, in particular by keeping victims updated as to the progress of their case*
- *Improve public satisfaction by listening to the feedback received and being more responsive to their needs.*

- *Produce a Local Policing Summary for 2006/07 and distribute it to every household.*
- *Allocate appropriate resources to support local, regional and national efforts to tackle terrorism and the illegal intimidation by animal rights and other extremists. Work closely with the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) to identify threats and inform actions.*
- *Optimise the recruitment, retention and progression opportunities for people from under-represented groups.*
- *Implement new training arrangements for police officer recruits and, wherever possible, integrate this with training opportunities for all other staff.*
- *Maximise the contribution of volunteers*

Reduced crime, increased detections and more offences brought to justice

- *Work in conjunction with our Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships to further reduce crime levels, with particular emphasis upon domestic burglary, vehicle crime, violent crime, taking into account new measures within the Violent Crime Reduction Bill*
- *In tandem with our Local Criminal Justice Board, increase the proportion of sanction detections and the number of offences brought to justice with particular emphasis upon results in relation to our priority crimes*
- *Increase our successes in relation to the prosecution of Class A drug dealers*
- *Invest additional resources in financial investigation and other related skills in order to increase the amount of assets seized and recovered in accordance with the Proceeds of Crime Act*
- *Review the Force Control Strategy every six months, to ensure that our specialist central resources are appropriately tasked and targeted in accordance with the National Intelligence Model*
- *Introduce the new national guidance on the investigation of domestic violence incidents and ensure that our policy and procedures are updated to reflect this*
- *Improve information and intelligence sharing with other forces by working towards implementation of the IMPACT programme (as recommended by the Bichard Enquiry).*
- *Work with partners to establish Local Safeguarding Children Boards and implement our duties in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children*
- *Ensure the Force's compliance with the NCPE (National Centre for Policing Excellence) Codes of Practice, including implementation of the new Code of Practice on information management.*
- *Increase custody capacity at Leominster and improve the efficient use of other cell accommodation, particularly in Herefordshire and Redditch.*

- *Increase significantly capacity and resilience in the provision of protective services by:*
 - *Increasing the Force's Major Incident (Homicide Investigation) capacity*
 - *Increasing the Force's Serious and Organised Crime capacity*
 - *Increasing the Force's capacity and capability to undertake surveillance and other covert techniques*
 - *Continuing to enhance our capacity and capability in the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition technology to deny criminals the use of the roads*

Reduced disorder and anti-social behaviour

- *Focus on tackling local issues in order to reduce people's concerns about anti-social behaviour and disorder, including vandalism, graffiti and damage to property.*
- *Reinforce the commitment to Local (Neighbourhood) Policing by increasing the number of Community Support Officers (bringing the total number of CSOs to 301), designated with appropriate powers, for deployment within policing teams.*
- *Continue to work with Local Authorities, other partner agencies and licensees to minimise alcohol-related violence, disorder and anti-social behaviour, and undertake co-ordinated and well-publicised enforcement campaigns in order to target alcohol related crime and disorder at key times of the year.*
- *Work with partners, including the Crown Prosecution Service, to target repeat anti-social behaviour offenders, making use of a wide range of potential responses including Anti-social Behaviour Orders (both civil and post conviction), Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Fixed Penalty Notices and other new powers available through the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003*

Reduced road casualties

- *Support Police Divisions in the achievement of local priorities, by providing specialist support in road policing and operations.*
- *Target rural main roads at night, which have proven records of fatal or serious road traffic collisions.*
- *Implement enforcement and education campaigns, including:*
 - *Drink / drug drive offences*
 - *Bad driving*
 - *Seat belt offences*
 - *Mobile phone offences*
 - *Speed offences*
 - *Hotspot targeting*
 - *Bikesafe initiative*

20. Throughout the year the Authority will monitor the performance of the Constabulary against the targets that have been set and later this year will produce its Annual Report on the performance of the Constabulary against the objectives set in the 2005/2006 Policing Plan.
21. The Three-Year Strategy and Policing Plan will be available on the Internet at www.westmercia.police.uk or from the Director to the Police Authority.

Assistant Chief Constable

22. Mr Peter Wright has been appointed as the force's new Assistant Chief Constable. This followed interviews held in early February 2006 when Mr Wright excelled in a strong field of candidates, which reflected the very high reputation West Mercia has in the policing world.
23. Mr Wright brings with him enormous experience and knowledge of West Mercia having served all over the area, including five years as the Chief Superintendent of the Shropshire Division.

Standards Committee

24. Colonel A A Ward of Offenham, near Evesham has been re-appointed as an independent member of the Police Authority's Standards Committee. This Committee exists to promote good working practices and high standards of conduct by members. Mrs V M Ainsworth of Leominster has also been appointed and replaces Mr J Kent of Clun who has retired. The appointments are for a four-year term.

Ambulance Service

25. The Authority has been advised of the consultation being undertaken by the Department of Health into restructuring proposals for the Ambulance Service. The Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Trusts have decided to submit a proposal for a sub-regional structure to be coterminous with the West Mercia Police Authority area. The Police Authority agreed to write a joint letter of support with the Chief Constable based on the provision of shared services and the advantages of co-terminosity.

Signed on behalf of the
West Mercia Police Authority

Paul Deneen
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) 344314.

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 meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held 14 February 2006.