

# **REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 13 JUNE 2006**

## ***Chair and Vice Chair***

1. At the Annual Meeting of the Authority held on 13 June 2006 Mr Paul Deneen (Ross on Wye, Herefordshire) and Mr Alan Thompson (Bringsty, Worcestershire) were re-appointed Chair and Vice Chair respectively for the ensuing year. Both are lay justice members.

## ***Membership***

2. The Authority placed on record its appreciation of the service Mr Arul Selveratnam (Newport, Shropshire) had given the Authority during his four years as a lay justice member, during which he chaired the Audit Committee and was lead member on health and safety. The Authority also welcomed his successor, Mr Robin Durham, a lay justice from Shrewsbury.

## ***Police Restructuring***

3. The Authority has commenced Judicial Review proceedings against the Government's proposal to merge the police authorities in the West Midlands region. At least five of the metropolitan district councils in the West Midlands area have also commenced Judicial Review proceedings.

4. The main thrust of the Police Authority's application is to challenge the process, which has been followed by the Home Office, and in particular the failure of the Home Secretary to provide specific information requested by the Authority regarding his proposals. The objection period was due to end on 2 July 2006.

5. The Authority has received a report from its Treasurer on the financial implications of the proposed precepting arrangements to accompany the merger and which highlights a £224m shortfall in funding if the Council Tax across the region is to be equalised over a five-year period. The Police Authority has real concerns at the impact that this could have on police officer numbers and on performance. Unless the Government decides to invest very heavily in covering this shortfall, 2,050 police officer posts could be lost in the first five years of the new force's existence. These concerns are in addition to the broader concerns which have already been voiced regarding set up costs and levels of assumed efficiency savings.

6. Since the Police Authority last reported there has also been a change at the Home Office with the appointment of Dr John Reid as Home Secretary and Mr Tony McNulty as Minister for Policing, Security and Community Safety. The Chair of the Police Authority and Chief Constable have continued to meet with local and other key MPs to discuss police mergers and have also met with Mr Tony McNulty MP.

7. The Chair of the Authority placed on record his grateful thanks to Members of Parliament, Councillors, stakeholders, consultative groups and residents for their

continued support of the West Mercia Strategic Police Service option – this is greatly appreciated.

8. Mr Deneen also thanked members of the Authority, Officers and the Chief Constable and his team for their all their hard work and efforts regarding this issue.

*On the 19 June 2006 the Home Secretary, speaking in the House of Commons said that people wanted to discuss in greater length and detail many of the questions arising from the proposals to merge forces.*

*Dr Reid, therefore, announced that he had decided, along with the Minister for Policing, Security and Community Safety, whom he has asked to deal with this issue, that this merited further and slower consideration. In so doing he did not promise a referendum but did promise discussion, dialogue and listening throughout.*

*A consequence of this is that the period for formal objections will be extended and the replacement timetable will be an item for discussion. The Home Secretary wants to ensure that people are given a proper opportunity to comment and raise objections once all the outstanding issues of relevance are resolved and communicated and that will determine the deadline by which objections have to be lodged.*

### **Corporate Governance Arrangements**

9. An independent Corporate Governance Report has been published by PricewaterhouseCoopers on 5 June 2006, reviewing the effectiveness of West Mercia Police Authority.

10. The review assessed performance in six areas, as defined in the CIPFA publication “The Good Governance Standard for Public Services”. The Authority was assessed as excellent in two areas and as good in four other areas. The summary table is shown here.

<b>Good Governance Principle</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Focusing on the organisation’s purpose and on outcomes for the public	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
Promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour	<b>GOOD</b>
Taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk	<b>GOOD</b>
Developing the capacity and capability of the Authority to be effective	<b>GOOD</b>
Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real	<b>GOOD</b>

### ***Local Policing Summary***

11. A new duty has been placed on police authorities to produce and distribute to all households a report for members of the public on matters relating to local policing (local policing summary) as soon as possible after the end of each financial year, with effect from 1 April 2006.

12. The summary highlights the introduction of new local policing teams across the West Mercia area and includes information on the proposed forced regional merger. It also highlights partnership working and local police contact details.

13. Five versions of the summary, one for each police division in West Mercia, have been produced and they contain generic information and specific information relevant to each of the divisional areas.

### ***Annual Report 2005/06***

14. The Authority has agreed the Joint Annual Report for 2005/2006, a copy of which will be available on the Internet at [www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk](http://www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk).

15. Notable achievements during the past year include:

- 10% reduction in total crimes recorded and 5% increase in the sanction detection rate.
- 22% reduction in domestic burglary and 5% increase in the sanction detection rate.
- 13% reduction in the level of violent crimes and 9% increase in the sanction detection rate.
- 11% reduction in the level of vehicle crimes and 3.5% increase in the sanction detection rate.
- West Mercia is the highest performing force, in its family of most similar forces, for sanction detection rates of the above types of crimes.

16. The Authority has congratulated the Chief Constable and his officers on continuing to build on last year's success and achieving further significant improvements in performance, in many cases exceeding the challenging targets that were set in the Policing Plan.

### ***Community Support Officers***

17. The Authority has agreed to accelerate the rate of recruitment of Community Support Officers (CSOs) and this will see an additional 183 CSOs on the streets of West Mercia by April 2007, bringing the total to 255. This effectively means recruiting an additional 65 officers to the original plan agreed in February 2006 to recruit 118 in 2006/07.

18. The Home Office has allocated an additional £1.43m grant this year to finance these posts and the Authority considers that this will be of great benefit to the communities of West Mercia, helping to provide reassurance in local

neighbourhoods and reducing anti-social behaviour. It will also fit in with the planned introduction of the 145 local policing teams across West Mercia.

### ***Special Priority Payments***

19. The Police Reform Programme provides for a local scheme for Special Priority Payments targeted at front line and operational police officers in particular. The Scheme requires annual ratification by the Police Authority and Home Office.

20. In developing the Scheme for 2006 special consideration has been given to police officers who undertake the role of local policing officers.

21. West Mercia's Scheme allows for payments of between £500 and £3000 (or £5000 in exceptional cases). The cost is anticipated to be £1.5m of which £1.2m will be met by a specific Home Office grant.

### ***Initial Police Learning Development Programme***

22. New arrangements for the training of new police officers were introduced in April 2006.

23. The new course includes a first week, which is suitable for anyone joining West Mercia as a corporate induction. The following five weeks are also designed to be delivered to CSOs and student officers (formerly known as probationers) jointly. This means if CSO later joins as a regular officer they do not have to repeat the training.

24. The Police Authority has been involved in the oversight of the introduction of the new arrangements and members have played an active part in explaining the role of the Authority to people attending the courses, two of which have so far commenced.

### ***Call Handling***

25. A new automatic call distribution system was introduced in 2005 and since early July 2005 the call management centre in the South of the force area has continued to demonstrate improved performance with calls answered in 10 seconds between 91% and 94%.

26. Performance on non-emergency call handling has been consistent throughout the year. Calls are normally actioned within 30 seconds, which is the national call handling standard.

27. "Speaks Quality" training has been delivered to 250 staff with a further 240 staff to be trained later in the year. A new database is also being established to give a caller's line history and a new resource and duty management system is being introduced in order to identify staff on duty and to facilitate ease of contact and follow up.

### ***Stop Search and Encounters***

28. The Authority has received a report on Stop Search and Encounter records for the period April 2005 to March 2006, which included a proportional analysis of ethnicity and stop search.

29. It was noted that although stops take place in the Force area, those stopped are not always part of the resident population. In the period April to June 2005, 12.2% of all Stop Searches related to persons living outside the Force area.

30. When looking at figures for Minority Ethnic Groups (MEGs) small fluctuations in figures can noticeably change results. For example, during the stated three month period there were a total of 45 recorded stops for Black or Black British persons, however further analysis highlighted only 21 persons were actually part of West Mercia's resident population.

31. In the last six months an average of 9.13 white people and 29.8 MEG per 1000 population had been stop searched. Therefore, statistically a MEG person is 3.26 times more likely to be stop searched per 1000 of the resident population. However this varied by division, with Shropshire the highest at 5.44 times and Telford and Wrekin the lowest at 1.96 times. These figures are based on the percentage of MEG as part of the overall population.

32. The actual number of persons stop searched per Ethnic Group per month showed about three black or black British people being stopped per police division per month against 172 white people. The total number of stop searches also varied between divisions, with North Worcestershire noticeably higher. However, this is believed to be due to several factors, including specific campaigns and the proximity to the Birmingham conurbation.

### ***Questions on Police Matters at Council Meetings***

33. The Authority is required to nominate a member to answer questions on the discharge of the functions of the Police Authority at meetings of the relevant councils and the following members were appointed for 2006/2007:

Herefordshire Council	Mr B Hunt
Shropshire County Council	Mr M Kenny
Telford and Wrekin Council	Mr J Hicks
Worcestershire County Council	Mr E Sheldon

### ***Police/Community Consultative Groups (PCCGs)***

34. The Authority has appointed the following members to attend meetings of PCCGs during 2006/2007.

Bridgnorth	Mrs M Winckler
Bromsgrove	Mrs S Blagg
Bromyard and District	Mr B Hunt
Droitwich Spa	Mr E Sheldon

Evesham and Pershore	Mr Z Padda
Hereford	Mr P Dunford
Herefordshire Rural	Mr P Deneen
Kington	Mr B Hunt
Leominster	Mr B Hunt
Malvern	Mr J Campion
North Shropshire	Mr R Forster
Oswestry	Mr R Durham
Redditch	Dr G Nathan
Shrewsbury	Mr R Durham/Mr M Kenny/Ms Pready-James
South Shropshire	Mr M Kenny
Telford and Wrekin	Mr R Forster/Mr J Hicks/Mrs K Tomlinson
Worcester	Mr R Peachey
Wyre Forest	Mr R Forster

Signed on behalf of the  
West Mercia Police Authority

P 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.

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).

*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 Annual Meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 13 June 2006.