

**REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY
HELD ON 20 MAY 2003**

Chairman and Vice Chairman

1. At the Annual Meeting of the Authority held on 20 May 2003 Mr R M Forster (Independent member, Telford) and Mr P Deneen (Magistrate member, Ross on Wye) were appointed Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively for the ensuing year.

Retirement of Members

2. The Authority placed on record its appreciation of the service to the Authority of the following members who had recently retired.

3. Mrs J H Thomas (Ross on Wye) was appointed to the Authority in 1993 as a representative of firstly Hereford and Worcester and then Herefordshire County Councils and was Chair during 2002/2003 and for six months during 2001/2002 when the Chairman was unwell. Mr Brian Watkins (Weobley) was appointed as an independent member in 1994 and served as Chairman of the Authority from 1998 to 2002.

4. Mr Peter Kelly (Shrewsbury) was also appointed in 1994 as an independent member and was Chairman of the Best Value and Stewardship Panel from 2000 to 2003 and the Shropshire Community Policing Board 2002/2003. Mr David Stevens (Hereford) was appointed an independent member in 1999 and was Chairman of the Herefordshire Community Policing Board from 2001 to 2003.

Appointment of Members

5. The following people have been appointed as independent members of the Authority for the four-year period commencing 1 April 2003:

<i>Mr P Dunford</i>	<i>Goodrich, Herefordshire</i>
<i>Mr R M Forster</i>	<i>Telford</i>
<i>Ms K Pready-James</i>	<i>Shrewsbury</i>
<i>Dr G Nathan</i>	<i>Redditch</i>

6. The Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin Councils held elections on the 1 May 2003 and the three existing councillor members on the Authority ceased to be members at that date. At the time of the Authority's meeting on 20 May 2003 the names of the three councillor members to serve on the Authority to the next elections were not known. The appointments will be made by a Joint Committee of the four relevant authorities (Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire).

Appointment of Chief Constable

7. Mr Paul West has been appointed Chief Constable with effect from 1 August 2003. Mr West was previously Deputy Chief Constable with the Thames Valley

Police and succeeds Mr Peter Hampson who was appointed Director General of the National Intelligence Service in February 2003.

Questions on Police Matters at Council Meetings

8. 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 2003/2004:

Herefordshire Council	<i>To be appointed</i>
Shropshire County Council	Mrs M E C Winckler
Telford and Wrekin Council	<i>To be appointed</i>
Worcestershire County Council	Mr P D Wicksteed

Police/Community Consultative Groups (PCCGs)

9. The Authority has appointed the following members to attend meetings of PCCGs during 2003/2004.

Bridgnorth	Margaret Winckler
Bromsgrove	Dilip Thakrar
Bromyard and District	Alan Thompson
Droitwich Spa	John Cairns
Evesham and Pershore	John Cairns
Hereford	Peter Dunford
Herefordshire Rural	Paul Deneen
Kington	<i>To be appointed</i>
Kidderminster	Dan Wicksteed
Leominster	<i>To be appointed</i>
Malvern	Jennette Davy
North Shropshire	Bob Forster
Redditch and District	Girija Nathan
Shrewsbury	Bill Morris
South Shropshire	Kate Pready-James
Telford and Wrekin	Arul Selvaratnam
Worcester	Alwyn Davies

Performance 2002/2003

10. The Authority received a report on the projected Performance Indicators out-turn figures for 2002/2003. The final results will be included in the Authority's Annual Report which will be published in September 2003. A summary of the main comments is shown below.

Service Delivery

- There have been 6239 domestic burglaries this year (2002-03) compared to 6037 over the same period of last year, 2001-02. This reflects changes in the counting rules and recording methods. Domestic burglary detection rates have improved from 17.8% to 20.1% for the same period of last year.

- There have been 728 robberies in 2002-03 compared to 667 over the same period of last year. However, the trend over the current year has been for reducing levels of robbery. Robbery detection rates have fallen slightly in 2002-03 with 25.4% compared to 27.4% in 2001-02.
- The force is continuing to meet its target for the number of vehicle crimes. The vehicle crime detection rate for 2002-03 is 12.88%. Although this narrowly misses the target of 13% it is a vast improvement on the last year's detection rate of 9.04%.
- The force has exceeded its target in relation to the number of violent crimes by 2500 crimes. The detection rates have improved from 60.49% to 67.23% for the same period last year, and the target is being achieved.
- The number of road traffic collisions involving death or serious injury has improved from 758 to 661 for the same period last year.

Quality of Service

- Of 20872 notifiable offences, 16397 were detected and a person then charged, reported for summons, cautioned or had the offence taken into consideration by the courts.

Fair Access

- The force is performing particularly well in relation to the % of racially aggravated crime detected. This year the force detected 51.06% of racially aggravated crimes compared to 40.52% for the same period last year.
- The force has failed its target in relation to the number of repeat victims of domestic violence. This year 39.54% were repeats compared to 38.23% last year.

Local Indicators

- The force has met its targets in relation to the % 999 calls answered in target time, % of recorded crime detected, number of public order incidents and % rural incidents responded to in target time.
- The force has not achieved its targets in relation to % non-999 calls answered within target time, number of recorded crimes and % urban incidents responded to in target time. However, all of these indicators were within 2% of their targets (based on actual numbers).
- The target of detecting 32% of crimes has been achieved and the total number of crimes detected was 33,707. This compared with a detection rate of 29% in 2001/2002 and the Authority has congratulated the Chief Constable on the force's performance.

11. The full performance figures will be assessed by the Authority and will be used to help inform the budget debates later in the year.

Capital Programme

12. The feasibility studies for the development of the new Divisional Headquarters in *Hereford* and *Shrewsbury* have been completed and a presentation on the various options has been received.

13. The financial implications are substantial and a separate report will be required to identify the best way of financing the preferred options. This will be considered during the summer and it is intended that the Police Authority will consider any Capital Programme proposals at its meeting on 23 September 2003.

14. Approval has been given to the construction of a new police station at *Bromyard* during 2003/2004 ahead of the replacement *Peterchurch* station. This decision was taken because it was considered that the existing condition of the Bromyard station warranted earlier replacement.

Budget 2003/2004

15. In agreeing the budget for 2003/2004 the Authority felt unable to set a precept sufficient to deliver all of the Chief Constable's proposals. These included a package referred to as 'Option 3 – Improving the Service Plus' that would have cost an additional £2,019,000. The Authority decided to include £365,000 within the budget to fund part of the Option 3 proposals and has agreed that the following should be implemented.

- *Support to Operational Policing by increasing the capacity of Criminal Justice resources, including updating and validating data held on the Crime Recording System and Police National Computer.*
- *Resources for proactive key operations aimed at target criminals, including the restructuring of the Fingerprint Bureau, appointment of a Forensic Investigator and an Intelligence Analyst.*
- *Interacting with the public in a better way and increased police officer availability by releasing one police officer per division for operational duties.*
- *Implementation of Best Value Reviews which require additional resources to drive up performance in Firearms Operation, a Misconduct Officer relating to crime and enhancement of communication and Public Safety Campaigns*

Recruitment of Officers

16. The Authority received a report on the appointment of the additional 300 police officer posts, which were approved in the 2002/2003 budget. At the time that decision was taken in February 2002 the police officer strength was 2020 and as at 1 April 2003 it had increased to 2342. A further 65 officers are signed up to commencement dates over the next few weeks and by June 2003 the 'Be Somebody Campaign' will have resulted in the recruitment of 477 new officers.

17. The Authority has congratulated the Chief Constable and his staff on this excellent achievement and are pleased to also report the appointment of a further 37 Community Support Officers.

Best Value Reviews

18. The Authority has approved the completion of the Best Value Review of Crime and Safety, which covered Major Crime, Force Crime Squad, Economic Crime Unit, Intelligence & Covert and Crime & Disorder Reduction.

19. The review resulted in a large number of options, the majority of which had little or no cost implications. The more significant items were highlighted to the Authority and work will now commence into categorising the cost implications with the intention of highlighting those that cannot be accommodated within the existing base budget. Those growth items will feed the annual financial planning process, which culminates in the preparation of the draft budget in late December and early January when details of the level of government grant are announced.

Stop and Search

20. The Government has issued a new Code of Practice that governs the police use of stop and search. The Code has been revised to reflect recommendations in the Lawrence Report and subsequent Home Office research. It makes important changes to people's rights and should have significant implications for police use of stop and search, in particular:

- the Code abolishes so-called "voluntary" searches;
- it gives tighter guidance on what constitutes "reasonable suspicion" and makes clear that a person's age, race, appearance etc. cannot alone constitute such reasonable suspicion. Officers must also give the person searched an explanation of the grounds for their reasonable suspicion;
- it encourages stop and search to be used in a focused, intelligence-led way;
- officers are expected to make a record of the search at the time and give this to the person immediately, unless there are exceptional reasons which make this wholly impractical;
- records will include the self-defined ethnicity of the person searched in accordance with the 16+1 monitoring system (classification scheme which provides 16 categories – e.g. White/Mixed/ Asian/ Black/ Other – plus where not stated); and
- police authorities, with their forces, are required to make arrangements for members of their communities to scrutinise stop and search data and explain the use of the powers to local people.

21. The new Code does not include the recording of all stops as recommended in the Lawrence Report but instead this recommendation is being implemented on a phased basis starting in seven years, including North Wales and the West Midlands.

22. A national training package has been arranged for all police officers and the Authority has a role in monitoring and analysing the records of stops and searches and ensuring that communities are aware of their rights when stopped and search. The Association of Police Authorities has produced publicity material, which has been distributed to each police division in West Mercia for local distribution. Copies are also available from the Clerk to the Police Authority and from the following website www.apa.police.uk.

Race Equality Scheme

23. The Constabulary's Race Equality Scheme (RES) was launched in November 2002 and the Authority has considered the strategy and action plan, copies of which are available on the Internet (www.westmercia.police.uk) or from the Clerk to the Authority.

24. The Constabulary has a duty to actively promote equality of opportunity for all employees and equality of service delivery to all its communities. The Authority will receive regular reports on the Constabulary's progress in implementing the action plan.

Freedom of Information Act

25. The Freedom of Information Act introduces a legal right of access to information held by public bodies. The Act encourages openness and accountability, which promotes good performance and propriety. The Authority and Constabulary have each adopted a publication scheme that sets out how information will be published and whether there will be a charge for information requested. The publication scheme will be in place by the end of June 2003. The schemes are monitored and enforced by the Information Commissioner.

Complaints against the Police 2003/2004

26. 357 complaints were recorded for the period 1 April to 31 March 2003 and these included oppressive behaviour, failures in duty and incivility. Out of this total 185 were finalised with 120 being informally resolved; 21 withdrawn, 40 waived, three unsubstantiated and one substantiated.

27. In total 376 complaints were completed during the period of which 23 were substantiated and 81 were unsubstantiated.

28. The Authority noted that there had been five racial complaints recorded, one of which had subsequently been withdrawn, one informally resolved, two were Sub Judice and one was currently under investigation.

29. During this period the force received 1,930,447 calls for assistance, 142,665 of which were '999' calls. In addition the following took place:

<i>Burglaries</i>	<i>48,873</i>
<i>Violent Crime</i>	<i>128,774</i>
<i>Thefts of Motor Vehicles</i>	<i>64,944</i>
<i>Thefts from Motor Vehicles</i>	<i>63,787</i>
<i>Arrests*</i>	<i>15,607</i>
<i>Serious Road Accidents**</i>	<i>536</i>
<i>Fatal Road Accidents **</i>	<i>89</i>
<i>Screening Breath Tests**</i>	<i>2745</i>
<i>Positive or Refused Breath Tests**</i>	<i>439</i>

** figures for period 1 April to 31 December 2002*

*** figures for period 1 April 2002 to 28 February 2003*

Assaults on Police Personnel

30. During 2002/2003 there were ten assaults on police personnel, which led to serious injuries and 235 minor injuries.

Sponsorship 2002/2003

31. West Mercia received sponsorship to the value of £71,000 in 2002/2003, which represents a decrease of £4,600 over the 2001/2002 figure of £75,600.

Police Property Act 1897

32. Under the Police Property Act 1897 seized property can be retained and used for police purposes. During 2002/2003 a number of items were retained relating to IT equipment, videotapes, stationary and bolt croppers.

Police Use of Lethal and Less Lethal Weapons

33. The Government has published a draft Code of Practice on police use of firearms and less lethal weapons. The Code sets out the basic principles in relation to the selection, testing, acquisition and use of firearms and less lethal weapons by the police. It also includes standards of competence, accreditation and operational practice; encourages good practice; continues the development and improvement of police responses to potentially violent situations; and police management of conflict.

34. The timescale for comments was tight and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) prepared a corporate response on behalf of all police authorities. The APA empathised that it is important that the code covers police authority responsibilities for oversight and representing the interests of local communities as well as future responsibilities for health and safety. The APA also commented that the term 'less lethal' weapons was not ideal and other alternatives, which may be more understandable to the public, should be considered.

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 Annual Meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 20 May 2003.