

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2010

Edward Sheldon MBE

1. It is with great sadness that the Authority reports the death of Ted Sheldon MBE, who passed away in September 2010. Mr Sheldon, a Worcestershire Councillor, was a much respected member of the Police Authority since 2005 and during that time was Chair of the South Worcestershire Policing Board and Vice Chair of the Human Resources Management Panel.

Treasurer

2. Mr Michael Weaver retired from the position of Treasurer to the Police Authority on 31 August 2010 and has been succeeded by Mr Patrick Birch, Interim Director of Finance with Worcestershire County Council.

3. The Authority has placed on record its appreciation of the exemplary service given by Mr Weaver since his appointment in 1998, during which time the Authority was nationally commended by the Audit Commission for its early completion of its Annual Accounts.

Planning for the Future Review

4. Following the completion of the Planning for the Future Review, West Mercia Police has moved to a new structure, based on a six command unit structure:

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| - Territorial Policing | - Human Resources |
| - Protective Services | - Strategy and Legal |
| - Operations Support | - Corporate Services |

5. The five Territorial Policing Areas Commanders are:

Herefordshire	Superintendent Charles Hill
North Worcestershire	Superintendent Adrian Pass
Shropshire	Superintendent Peter Lightwood
Telford and Wrekin	Superintendent Gary Higgins
South Worcestershire	Superintendent Stephen Cullen

6. The force's new operating model would allow the continued delivery of a high quality policing service throughout West Mercia, but at the same time deliver savings of £9.8 million. The structure retains clearly identified senior officers responsible for local command and at the same time significantly restructures the way in which frontline officers and staff would be supported. The changes make West Mercia Police more streamlined and effective, freeing up officers to focus upon operational policing and operational command

7. The Police Authority considers that the changes should position the force to deliver policing services effectively in a difficult economic climate. West Mercia Police enjoys a national reputation as a value for money force and a high priority has been given to protecting frontline services delivered to the 1.2 million citizens of West Mercia.

Police Authority Inspection

8. West Mercia Police Authority has been given a clean bill of health following an independent Inspection by the Audit Commission acting jointly with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.
9. The report has given the Authority an overall grading of three which equates to 'performs well' and reflected particularly strong performance in setting strategic direction and achieving good value for money. No other police authority in the country has received a higher grading.
10. The report does contain some suggestions for further improvement and these will now be studied by the Authority. However any proposals will have to be considered carefully in the context of the current severe financial climate and the Authority's drive to reduce bureaucracy not increase it.

Policing in the 21st Century

11. The Government's consultation paper 'Policing in the 21st Century' was published in July 2010 with an unusually short consultation period given its wish to see Police Commissioners introduced by May 2012.
12. The Police Authority has submitted its response and the key messages were:
 - Commissioners' elections and referenda will be very costly at a time of constraints upon police funding.
 - Commissioners as proposed will simply be ineffectual unless the boundaries around operational independence are revisited.
 - Public expectations around Commissioners are likely to focus on 'local operational delivery' and 'complaints'. The Commissioner appears to have very limited powers in these areas.
 - The changes risk the politicisation of policing.
 - The proposed changes will be a distraction for Forces at a time when they need to respond to severe financial constraints.
 - There is no evident public demand for this change.

Government's Financial Statement

13. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Statement on the Comprehensive Spending Review would be announced on 20 October and the Grant allocation for West Mercia Police Authority would be set in November/December. The Government has also announced a full review of Police Officer conditions of service.

Civil Emergencies, Public Order and Critical Incidents

14. An update has been provided on the force's planning for civil emergencies, public order and critical incidents, including the Pope's visit to Birmingham in September 2010, where a large number of officers were deployed due for traffic management, and the planning for the Olympic Games in 2012.

Monitoring of Policing Plan Aims 2010/11

15. The Authority keeps the performance of the force under regular review and monitors the progress made against the aims included in the Policing Plan 2010/11.

16. The performance indicates that the majority are on target and of particular note are:

Strategic Aim 2009-2012	Target/ Baseline	Actual
Overall victim satisfaction with service provided by the police	86%	88.5%
Total sanction detection rate for serious violent crime (against the person)	50%	54.8%
Total sanction detection rate for serious violent crime (serious sexual offences)	30%	31%
Percentage of people who perceive a high level of anti social behaviour in their local area	12.3%	10.4%
Reduction in road casualties	183	136

17. The actual number of Serious Violent Crimes (serious violence against the person) was higher than the predicted target for the end of July, however, the volume is in line with the number of offences recorded at the same point in time as in the previous two years.

18. The force performed strongly last year in relation to the Number of Robberies and Sanction Detection Rate. There had been 183 robberies against a baseline of 151 and analytical work was in progress on the type and volume of robberies in each area. The Sanctioned Detections Rates for Robberies and Burglaries were just under target and the Authority will continue to keep these under review.

19. Assault with a Less Serious Injury was below target as the weather had been better this year than in the corresponding period in 2009.

20. The Authority also noted the progress on the work being carried out with Staffordshire, Warwickshire and West Midland Police to increase the number of collaborative projects, including Firearms, Training, ICT (Information Communications Technology), Procurement, Custody, Capital Expenditure, Control Rooms/Contact Centres, Major Investigations, Human Resources Services, Estate and Fleet Management.

Stop and Search

21. The Authority has reviewed the statistics on Stop Search during 2009/10, where 12,122 were recorded by West Mercia Police. The numbers of arrest and positive searches confirm that when used in appropriate circumstances, it was a positive police power. The low numbers of complaints generated by the use of these powers also indicate that the powers were properly targeted and implemented with sensitivity.

22. A recent report produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission concluded that a number of police forces in the country were using the stop and search tactic in a way that was disproportionate and possibly discriminatory. Whilst West Mercia was not one of those forces required by the Commission to explain their performance in this area the report did indicate that there had been a disproportionate increase in stops of BME people. The force was satisfied that these values had been largely influenced by the surge in use of stop search powers in Telford and Wrekin, but the data would be re-examined to obtain a greater understanding of these figures and reported back to the Police Authority. An 'Action Plan' would be compiled to aid this understanding. It would include the appointing of a Force lead at Chief Police Officer level for Stop Search, identified territorial leads for stop search, a review of stop search training, data monitoring, regular data reviews by Police Authority members and an analysis of community scrutiny methods.

Local Policing Summary

23. The Police Authority has decided that this year's Local Policing Summary will be published electronically rather than being distributed to all households, thereby saving in the region of £32,000. A media release will be issued outlining the contents of the summary and advising that paper copies will be available on request.

Queen's Police Medal

24. Chief Superintendent Jane Horwood, who recently retired from her role as Divisional Commander for the South Worcestershire Division, was awarded the Queen's Police Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Police Questions at Police Authority Meetings

25. New arrangements have been introduced to enable the public to ask questions on the duties and responsibilities of the Police Authority and these come into effect at the next meeting on 14 December 2010. Details are available on the Authority's website or can be requested (contact details shown below).

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.

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 28 September 2010.