

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 14 JUNE 2011

Chair and Vice Chair

1. Mrs Sheila Blagg (Bromsgrove, Worcestershire) has been appointed Chairman of the Police Authority for the ensuing year.
2. Mr Robin Durham (Shrewsbury, Shropshire) and Mr Zad Padda (Evesham, Worcestershire) have been appointed as Vice Chairs.

Chief Constable

3. The Police Authority placed on record its appreciation of the service given to West Mercia by the Chief Constable, Paul West QPM, who will be leaving at the end of July 2011.
4. Since his appointment in 2003 he has made an outstanding contribution to policing both in West Mercia and nationally. Policing performance in West Mercia has undergone significant improvement, including substantial reductions in overall crime and burglary levels.
5. Mr West's work with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has included leading on areas of management of sexual and violent offenders and he led the national implementation of the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (Sarah's Law). He also led for ACPO in respect of professional standards and oversaw the transition to the post Taylor reforms (streamlining of discipline procedures). Since 2009 he has served as the Chair of CPOSA (Chief Police Officers Staff Association).
6. The Police Authority is pleased to report that following a selection process the Deputy Chief Constable, Mr David Shaw, has been appointed Chief Constable with effect from 1 August 2011. Arrangements will be made for the selection of a new Deputy Chief Constable during the Autumn. *(At the Authority's Appointments and Remuneration Committee meeting held on 21 June 2011, Assistant Chief Constable Simon Chesterman was appointed to the position of Acting Deputy Chief Constable with effect from 1 August 2011 and until the appointment of the substantive Deputy Chief Constable takes effect or 28 February 2012 whichever is sooner).*

Appointment of Members

7. Following the local elections in Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin in May 2011 the following councillor members have been appointed to the Police Authority:

Keith Austin
Sebastian Bowen
Clive Elliott

Telford and Wrekin
Herefordshire
Telford and Wrekin

8. Changes have also been made to the Shropshire and Worcestershire councillor members, with the following being appointed to the Police Authority:

Steve Brown	Worcestershire
Mary Drinkwater	Worcestershire
Malcolm Pate	Shropshire

9. The Authority recorded its appreciation to the following retiring members:

Bob Bullock	Worcestershire
Bernard Hunt	Herefordshire
Miles Kenny	Shropshire
Andy Roberts	Worcestershire
Kuldip Sahota	Telford and Wrekin
Richard Smith	Herefordshire

Annual Report 2010/2011

10. The Police Authority has a statutory duty to ensure the provision of an efficient and effective police force in its area. It does so by appointing senior police officers including the Chief Constable, by setting policing priorities annually, by reviewing and approving the overall policing budget and by setting the element of Council Tax. It has a responsibility to keep informed of public opinion on policing issues and to monitor the delivery of services to the public. The Authority has agreed the Joint Annual Report for 2010/2011, a copy of which will be available on the Internet at www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk.

11. The challenge to the Policing budget in West Mercia continues to be dominated by the national economic climate. This has underlined the importance of focusing resources on the priority areas, whilst retaining the flexibility to adapt to any national, regional or local needs as they arise.

12. Overall West Mercia Police has continued to maintain a high level of performance; however, after six years of recorded crime consistently falling, the end of year figures show a small rise in recorded crime volume to 72,142, compared to 71,250 as at March 2010. Other results include an 11% reduction in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents and the lowest level of house burglaries for six years.

13. One measure which is difficult to ascertain 'good' performance in, is the number of serious sexual offences as improvements in our approach to dealing with victims, including the use of independent advocates, has led to increased reporting by victims and therefore an increase in numbers. Across West Mercia in 2010/11 there were 906 serious sexual offences, an increase of 11% over the previous year. Although sexual offences do present a complex picture, the Authority strives to understand the related issues, to challenge the force where necessary and then take proactive measures to provide support. One successful measure was the work done by members to enable the Force to develop, in partnership, schemes such as the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

14. Through this time of managing financial uncertainty the Police Authority has been working with the force to ensure that the Government's Comprehensive

Spending Review and any changes to grant funding can be balanced against the internal structural review of the force. The internal review has been strategic, with a focus on maintaining effective policing.

15. In addition West Mercia Police has been looking at the feasibility of establishing a strategic alliance with Warwickshire Police, as well as continuing to look at opportunities for collaboration on a regional basis.

16. In September 2010 Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) published an ungraded assessment of the Force's approach to anti-social behaviour. In this report the Force was said to be 'performing broadly in line with the national average'. However, HMIC recommended the Force should look to improve satisfaction levels around taking people seriously. Assistant Chief Constable Simon Edens, who leads nationally for the Association of Chief Police Officers on Antisocial Behaviour, is currently piloting a national project on behalf of the Home Office to address this issue, through undertaking risk assessments of victims specific needs. The results of this initiative will be known by September.

17. September 2010 also saw the publication of a Police Authority inspection report, carried out by HMIC and the Audit Commission. Of the 22 police authorities inspected, West Mercia was one of only seven authorities to be awarded grade 3 (performing well) and one of only four to achieve this grade for both Setting Strategic Direction and Delivering Value for Money.

18. Overall the Police Authority is confident that West Mercia Police continues to be well placed to address all the challenges ahead and is capable of sustaining a cost effective, high standard of policing.

19. Under the Government's proposals for Police Reform this is the last year that Police Authorities will deliver the governance of policing. In May 2012 the governance role will pass to directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. The Police Authority believe the Commissioner will inherit a strong legacy, a force in good shape, and a force capable to deliver effective policing in the most efficient way to the 1.2 million citizens of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and Worcestershire.

Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire Police

20. The Authority was advised that initial proposals had been developed for a Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire Police and a joint meeting between the two police authorities would be held on 21 June 2011 to consider these. Meetings of the two police authorities had also been arranged for the following week to consider the recommendations.

Neighbourhood Watch

21. West Mercia Police fully supports and values the role Neighbourhood Watch plays in improving community safety and confidence, together with the time and effort expended by volunteers in making it a success.

22. The Planning for the Future review identified £9.8 million of savings across West Mercia Police. The Territorial Policing Command's contribution to this amount was calculated to be £1 million. The command is entirely operationally focused and a significant proportion of this saving was achieved through the rationalisation of senior Territorial Policing Units' police officer roles. The remainder of the £1 million was released through the adoption of a more consistent and corporate approach to local policing support functions such as licensing, Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) management and volunteer / Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) co-ordination.

23. Two Territorial Policing Support Centres (hubs) based in the North and South of the Force have been established and will provide support to NHW and associated schemes. The new hub model reflects national moves to embed specific NHW support within the wider volunteering spectrum and West Mercia has created two Community Co-ordinator roles, supervised by the Volunteer Programme Manager. Their primary roles and responsibilities include managing NHW, assisting in the development of new schemes and circulating advice and information to Watch Schemes.

24. West Mercia will also take steps to consolidate the current five automatic Ringmaster alert systems into a central system, which will deliver both financial and operational benefits. NHW will also continue to be supported by part of a Police Constable role situated within the small territorial policing central team and the other elements of the wider network of local policing professionals located within these hubs as appropriate.

25. The Police Authority will continue to monitor the implementation of these changes, which have generated some concerns from NHW schemes.

Independent Custody Visiting Scheme

26. The Independent Custody Visiting Scheme provides a check on the conditions under which people are detained in police custody and provides an independent check on the way police officers and detention officers carry out their duties.

27. There are over 60 Independent Custody Visitors (ICVs) in West Mercia and they are drawn from members of the community from all parts of the force area. The Police Authority continues to welcome applications from people wishing to join the Scheme, particularly from the Herefordshire area.

28. During 2010/11 a total of 319 visits were made to the custody units at Hereford, Leominster, Kidderminster, Malinsgate (Telford), Redditch, Shrewsbury and Worcester during the year. This ensured that in line with the Police Authority's target the custody facilities in each area were visited on average once a week, which was an exceptional achievement by the volunteer ICVs.

29. 1,246 people were in custody at the time of the visits out of which 84% of the detainees who were available for a visit consented to meeting with the Independent Custody Visitors. Reasons for detainees not being seen included being interviewed, in consultation with their solicitor, asleep or visitors being advised not to see the detainee where there were health and safety concerns.

30. A number of issues had to be clarified during the year in relation to access to custody units and detainees and whilst there were no other main areas of concern,

where issues were raised these were dealt with satisfactorily and reported to the Police Authority as appropriate. Other issues raised during the year included medical matters, washing facilities (mainly access to showers), toilets, bedding, drinks, food and the detention of illegal immigrants in police stations.

31. The Police Authority and Chief Constable's appreciation of the excellent work of the independent custody visitors was emphasised at the Annual Meeting of the Scheme and helped ensure that West Mercia provided a good standard of custody care. In recognition of 2011 being the 20th Anniversary of Independent Custody Visiting Scheme in West Mercia, each ICV will receive a commemorative certificate from the Chair of the Police Authority.

Public Order and Critical Incidents

32. A protocol has been agreed between the Police Authority and the Chief Constable in the event of any public order event or critical incident, which may have a significant impact on West Mercia.

33. The protocol recognises the clear and complimentary responsibilities of the two parties and allows the Chief Constable to deal with operational matters efficiently and effectively while the Police Authority holds the Chief Constable to account for the way in which they are carried out.

34. Examples of actual or anticipated events, circumstances or incidents covered by this protocol include:

- Operations likely to have a significant or disproportionate effect on particular communities in terms of diversity, geography or have a bearing politically or on the reputation of the force.
- Significant issues, events or circumstances likely to give rise to contentious or high profile media coverage at a national, regional or force wide level, to include any major public order events.
- Operations where assistance from West Mercia Police is requested under terms of mutual aid arrangements with other police forces where such mutual aid and assistance is likely to generate press comment.

Joint Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy

35. The Police Authority has agreed a Joint Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy with the force. This includes a consultation meeting with strategic partners on 15 November 2011 to inform development of the policing priorities for 2012/13. There will also be a Webcast, with an invited audience, which will be broadcast live on an evening in January 2012.

Commendations and Honours

36. Chief Constable Commendations have recently been awarded to Senior Forensic Investigator Paul Beeton for his work in the murder investigation at Osbaston House, Oswestry; DC Neil Preece, PC Robert Loach and DC Paul

Suckling in relation to the murder of George Black in Bucknell, Shropshire; and Inspector Simon Lewis, PC Michael Dulson and PC Benjamin Hocking for their courage and selflessness in the aftermath of a gas explosion in Shrewsbury.

Significant Cases and Court Results

37. The Police Authority has been updated on significant cases and court results including fraud, grievous bodily harm, manslaughter, murder, rape and wasting police time during a murder inquiry.

Questions on Police Matters at Council Meetings

38. 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 2011/2012:

Herefordshire Council	Mr S Bowen
Shropshire County Council	Mr M Pate
Telford and Wrekin Council	Mr K Austin
Worcestershire County Council	Mrs S Blagg

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 Annual Meeting of the West Mercia Police Authority held on 14 June 2011.