



Committee and date

Council 16 July 2009

Item

Paper

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 5 MAY 2009

Significant Crown Court Results Criminal Convictions in the West Mercia Force Area

1. The Authority received a report from the Chief Constable on recent significant court cases across the area and which included successful convictions in relation to:

Herefordshire Division

- Six defendants received sentences totalling 27 years' imprisonment for offences relating to extortion and intimidation of members of the Polish migrant worker community in Herefordshire. In passing sentence, the presiding judge also commented on the good work undertaken by Acting Inspector Martyn Barnes and Detective Constable Emma Whitworth.

South Worcestershire Division

- A 35-year-old Evesham drug dealer who was caught on CCTV handing over heroin to a customer in Quay Street, Worcester, is now serving four years in jail. The dealer was rugby-tackled by an off-duty police officer, who found £56 drug profits in his right sock and 18 wraps of heroin in the left. The dealer pleaded guilty to supply, possession with intent to supply, burglary, theft, fraud and obstructing police. He had 84 previous offences, including three previous dwelling burglaries and has already served eight years for robbery.
- A father who repeatedly raped and sexually assaulted his pre-teenage daughter over a four-year period is now serving eight concurrent prison sentences. The sexual assaults began in 1983 when the victim was seven and developed into rape until the offences came to light in 1987 when she was 11. She did not want her family split up at that age so she did not allow anyone to report the abuse to the police and they were not informed until recently when she was in her early 30s.

North Worcestershire Division

- Muriel Southall and her lover Michael Whitcombe have been jailed for life for the murder of Reginald Southall, whose body was recovered from the River Severn near his home in Stourport.

Mr Southall went missing on the evening of 4th December 2007, after he went for a walk with his wife but she did not report his disappearance until the following day.

A missing person inquiry was launched and Mr Southall's body was subsequently recovered from the River Severn near their home at the Redstone Lane caravan park on 16th December. He was a non-swimmer and the inquiry developed into a murder investigation after a post mortem revealed that he had suffered significant injuries consistent with being assaulted prior to entering the river.

The police investigation, codenamed Operation Tower, lasted several months and at its height more than 100 detectives and officers were involved in inquiries and searching the riverbanks and countryside within a 12 square mile radius of Stourport. A specialist team of police divers from South Wales was also brought in to trawl the riverbed.

This was an unusual and complex case that was particularly challenging because at the outset there were no witnesses to Mr Southall's disappearance, no forensic scene and, due to the quiet riverside location, no CCTV.

However, traditional detective work combined with modern technology, forensics and expertise enabled West Mercia to slowly piece this case together.

- Former Redditch Borough Council Leader David Cartwright aged 52 was jailed for three years for stealing and defrauding a charity for homeless people in Worcestershire. He admitted to stealing over £24,500 belonging to the charity – Step Out Drop In – between January 2003 and December 2005.

Shropshire Division

- Following the deaths of the Foster family at Osbaston House, Maesbrook, the coroner recorded a verdict of unlawful killing in the case of Jill and Kirstie Foster and ruled that Christopher Foster had killed himself. The two day hearing at Shrewsbury attracted national and international media coverage. A documentary was made regarding the incident and shown on Channel Four.
- A 36 year old man was jailed indeterminately (with a minimum sentence of four years) after admitting raping a young woman as she walked home along the Dana footbridge in Shrewsbury. This was a particularly violent attack in which the victim suffered multiple injuries including two broken ribs. CCTV played a significant role in identifying the offender and the case attracted considerable media attention.
- Two teenagers who shot and killed two Shetland ponies belonging to a nursing home in Whitchurch have been jailed. An 18 year old youth was sentenced to four years youth custody and a 15 year old to two years custody. The case attracted widespread media attention.

Telford and Wrekin

- A 41 year old male from St Georges was sentenced to seven years for a 'vigilante' attack on a convicted sex offender in Telford on 17 June 2008. The offender slashed his victim's neck with a craft knife during the attack. The victim suffered a cut to his nose and a 30cm wound to his back, and needed surgery.
- Two robbers who attacked a man at knifepoint as he waited to buy drugs on a Telford Housing Estate have been jailed.
- A 27 year old male was imprisoned for four years, and a 26 year old male for four and half years. In addition to the charge of robbery, both men admitted two thefts and one also admitted possessing an offensive weapon and assault.

Commendations

2. Eight Chief Constable's Commendations and six Divisional Commendations were presented to officers and staff involved in Operation Kingpin, the investigation into a number of criminal offences committed against residents of "The Glen" Residential Park Home site, Bromsgrove.

3. The investigation illustrated very graphically what can occur if a residential park home site should fall into the hands of an unscrupulous owner, interested only in maximising profit from the site. This is a form of criminality which nets huge profits for those involved and devastates the lives of many vulnerable members of our communities. In February 2009 the seven defendants received a total of sixty four years' imprisonment.

4. In addition to officers and staff receiving commendations, those attending the commendation ceremony included residents from the Park, representatives of both national residential owners' associations and national park site owners' bodies, representatives from the Department of Local Government Communities and trade journalists.

5. On a national basis, West Mercia is continuing to seek to raise awareness and understanding of park home industry crime within the police service, to show how the legislation which governs the industry is used to cloak serious offending and to illustrate the positive outcomes that can be achieved for West Mercia communities where the police conduct a thorough investigation. The Investigation Officer in the case was invited by Vernon Coaker, MP, the Minister of State, to present an update on this investigation at the Home Office.

Planning Process 2010/2011

6. The Police Authority has agreed the planning process for the development of the 2010/2011 Policing Plan. As part of this process a consultation event will be held in November 2009 with Chief Executives and Chairs of the Local Strategic Partnerships of the four top tier authorities in the area.

7. Stakeholder consultation evenings will also be held in Hereford, Shrewsbury, Telford and Worcester during January 2010.

West Mercia Police

8. The Police Authority having received a detailed report from the Chief Constable have approved a change of name from West Mercia Constabulary to West Mercia Police in order to reflect the way the public view the service.

9. In addition a new logo and motto has been launched - 'Serving, Protecting and Making a Difference'. The cost of this is minimal and changes to vehicles, uniforms, equipment, stationery and signage will only take place as and when the need arises. It is anticipated that this will take at least two years to complete across the West Mercia area.

Police Authority Structure

10. The Police Authority has agreed a new structure to reflect the changing roles and responsibilities, not least with respect to Partnerships, Local Engagement and Accountabilities. The revised structure centres around five key panels:

Citizen Focus and Partnerships
Equality and Human Rights
Finance

People
Strategic Policing

Stop and Account

11. Following a direct recommendation from Sir Ronnie Flanagan's Review into Policing, the Home Secretary has agreed to a change in the recording of police stops, which will reduce bureaucracy considerably whilst ensuring the powers are used fairly by the police.

12. In future it will no longer be necessary to record the personal details of people who are stopped, but not searched, by the police. To ensure accountability, the officer will still need to let the person stopped know who they are and record the ethnic background of that person.

Signed on behalf of the
West Mercia Police Authority

Paul Deneen JP DL
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) 264690.

Further information on the West Mercia Police Authority can also be found on the Internet at www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk.

Questions on the functions of the Police Authority

The Authority has nominated the following members to answer questions on the discharge of the functions of the Police Authority at meetings of the relevant councils:

<i>Herefordshire Council</i>	<i>Mr B Hunt</i>
<i>Shropshire County Council</i>	<i>Mr M Kenny</i>
<i>Telford and Wrekin Council</i>	<i>Mr K Sahota</i>
<i>Worcestershire County Council</i>	<i>Mr E Sheldon, MBE</i>

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 5 May 2009.