

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF WEST MERCIA POLICE AUTHORITY HELD ON 14 JULY 2009

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.
3. The Authority recorded its appreciation of the outgoing Chair, Mr Paul Deneen who, in his four years office, had been exceptional, making a tireless contribution from which the whole Authority and West Mercia Police had benefited.

Membership

4. Following the local government elections in Shropshire and Worcestershire in June 2009 the councillor members named below were appointed to the Police Authority:

Mrs Sheila Blagg	Worcestershire County Council
Mr Bob Bullock	Worcestershire County Council
Mr Brandon Clayton	Worcestershire County Council
Mr Miles Kenny	Shropshire Council
Mr Edward Sheldon	Worcestershire County Council
Mr Michael Wood	Shropshire Council

5. The Authority placed on record its appreciation of the councillor members who were not reappointed for their service and contribution:

Mr John Campion	Worcestershire County Council
Mr Robert Peachey	Worcestershire County Council
Mrs Margaret Winckler	Shropshire County Council

Annual Report 2008/09

5. The Authority has agreed the Joint Annual Report for 2008/2009, a copy of which would be available on the Internet at www.westmerciapoliceauthority.gov.uk.
6. During the year West Mercia Police had continued to maintain a high level of performance results and for the fifth year running had achieved an overall reduction in crime. Key to achieving these results was a focusing on the priority areas identified in the joint policing plan, which included an improvement in detection rates for serious sexual offences and completing local policing priorities on time.
7. Both the Force and the Police Authority had during the year actively engaged in local partnerships, recognising the importance placed on shared targets and shared delivery across the West Mercia area. In addition, there had been continued

and active participation in increased collaboration and joint working with neighbouring forces and authorities.

8. West Mercia Police had been engaged in a number of high profile major operations through the year and had successfully managed staffing levels, prioritising effort at these times. Its approach to tackling major crime had also been endorsed through independent assessment.

9. The Force faced an ongoing challenge of recognising and adapting to changing or emerging threats. This year in particular the Authority had been made aware of the ever growing area of internet crime and the challenges this presented for the High Tech Crime Unit (see separate report below).

10. With the introduction of a new target based on public confidence and the roll out of the Policing Pledge, the Police Authority had worked very closely with the Chief Constable in developing measures that would be used to track progress against these initiatives as well as agreeing other measures to allow effective ongoing monitoring of the policing plan targets.

11. Once again the Police Authority and Chief Constable are confident that West Mercia Police will meet all the challenges ahead and will continue to be seen as high performing, cost efficient and effective, delivering the high standard of policing services for the people of West Mercia.

Significant Recent Court Cases

12. Since the Authority's last meeting in May 2009 there have been some further significant court results, which are summarised below:

Herefordshire

Three people aged between 17 and 18 were sentenced to up to five years imprisonment for a reign of violence including two very serious woundings in Hereford. In addition a man was convicted for a string of violent offences, including an assault in a Hereford public house.

Shropshire Division

A travel company executive from Shrewsbury has been jailed for fraud and deception. In addition a prolific burglar has received a prison sentence and two men were also jailed for three and five years for supplying heroin in the Shrewsbury area. This followed the conclusion of Operation Rock, an eight month investigation into the supply of heroin in the town centre which saw a total of thirteen people arrested.

Telford and Wrekin Division

A Telford man was jailed for nearly seven years for offences including assaulting a police officer, grievous bodily harm and possessing a sawn off shot gun. Three men from the Manchester area have been jailed for the robbery of a bank in Dawley, Telford.

Worcestershire

Two members of an armed gang who carried out a raid at Tesco Express in Droitwich were jailed for six years, whilst a Worcester man was given a four and a half year sentence for dealing in cocaine.

Members of a drugs gang were jailed for between nine months and five years for growing cannabis at two places, including one in Redditch. A Kidderminster man was given an indeterminate jail term in the interests of public protection for kidnap and other offences.

Following the discovery of a body at a waste depot in London it was ascertained that the body had originally been placed in a recycling bin in Redditch. Two people have received life sentences for murder.

Stop and Search

13. The Authority has reviewed the Stop and Search data for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009 where a total of 12,229 Stop Searches were recorded compared to 10,835 the previous year, equating to a 12.9% increase. The total number of complaints arising out of the use of this was very low at 21 (0.17%). Such complaints are reviewed monthly by the Professional Standards Department. The Police Authority also carries out a dip sample.

14. Stop searches are influenced by factors relating to local community tensions, the targeting of crime trends as well as abstractions to major enquiries. The benefit of the use of the powers was evidenced by a number of successes in relation to theft of metal, including street drain covers.

15. The very low number of complaints generated by the use of these powers (21 or 0.17% of all Stop Searches) lends weight to the assertion that the powers were properly targeted and implemented with sensitivity. Their usage would be monitored to ensure that this trend continued.

Professional Standards

16. During the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009, West Mercia Police recorded 838 complaint cases containing 1328 allegations. In comparison to the same period last year there were 806 complaint cases recorded containing 1170 allegations, a 4% rise in complaint cases and a 13.5% rise in complaint allegations. Out of the complaints made 88% were not substantiated.

17. Comparison with other forces would be carried out to seek to identify good practice and it was also intended to look at private companies with a good reputation for integrity in order to learn lessons on improving confidence within the Force. The Independent Police Complaints Commission was also putting in place standard performance measures for the complaints system to establish uniformity across the police service.

Commendations and Honours

18. Chief Constable Commendations have recently been awarded to officers involved in a variety of cases including a robbery where two people died, the protection of three young children from abuse, family liaison following a drowning incident in France, an animal rights related extremism enquiry and the attempted murder of a baby. Mr Brian Williams was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours' List for his loyal service over more than fifty years as secretary of the Hereford Police Choir.

Police Academy

19. The Police Academy is a concept that has been used in the USA and involves identified sections of the community undertaking a voluntary course aimed at improving their knowledge and understanding of policing. It has recently been successfully introduced in West Mercia

20. The first programme was targeted at over 55s in Shropshire and involved a three hour session every Wednesday for ten weeks. Eighteen people completed the course and subjects covered included distraction burglary, forensics, local and response policing, firearms, the force helicopter, the force control room and there were guest speakers from the Crown Prosecution Service, Trading Standards and the Fire Service.

21. The programme was a great success and several participants were now performing voluntary roles with the Police as well as being vocally very positive community advocates.

22. Two further programmes were planned, aimed at the 18 – 24 age group (Shropshire) and the Muslim Community (Worcester).

Summary of Force Communication Campaigns

23. Recent campaigns organised by or involving West Mercia Police have included:

- Safe and Secure – home security advice
- National Tackling Drugs Week – aimed at increasing public confidence in and awareness of the work being done locally to tackle drug related issues.
- Get Involved Week – promoted the various volunteering opportunities available and other ways people can become involved in making a difference to their community.
- Rogue Trader Day – led by Trading Standards and included vehicle and trader stop checks, reassurance patrols and leaflet drops.
- PACT (Partners and Communities Together) and the Policing Pledge – leaflets containing details of the Policing Pledge and recent PACT priorities produced for each local policing team area.
- Mini Motors – leaflet being developed to raise awareness among parents on the law relating to mini motors.

24. Details of current campaigns can be found on the West Mercia Police website www.westmercia.police.uk

Internet safety

25. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has developed a specific programme entitled "Think U Know" aimed at developing awareness amongst school children. West Mercia Police was also developing a parents and carers package on Internet Safety which had been very well received. Presentations would be delivered across the force area during the next few months.

Special Priority Payments

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

27. The Scheme for 2009 rewards those officers who perform front line operational duties or are regularly required to work additional hours which place significant restrictions on their private life for which they do not receive additional compensation. The following types of post qualify:

- Category A: operational posts which are part of a published rostered shift pattern which covers a cyclical 24 hour, 7 day period.
- Category B: operational posts which are part of a published rostered shift pattern which regularly and frequently involves working a minimum of three hours between 00:00 and 07:00
- Category C: posts which are part of a formal on call rota, which regularly places significant restrictions on the Officer's private life, and for which he/she may not receive any additional compensation.

Questions on Police Matters at Council Meetings

28. 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 2009/2010:

Herefordshire Council	Mr B Hunt
Shropshire County Council	Mr M Kenny
Telford and Wrekin Council	Mr K Sahota
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 July 2009.