

Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee 9 February 2012

Warwickshire Police Neighbourhood Policing Review

Recommendation

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the role of Neighbourhood Policing in Warwickshire and comment on any key issues arising from the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Following the election of a new Government in May 2010, an emergency budget increased the Force's budget gap to £13.4 million over four years. In October 2010, the Government announced its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), which outlined significant funding reductions to the police service between 2011/14. As a result, the budget gap increased to £22.9 million over the four-year period.
- 1.2 A Warwickshire Police Programme Team was established under the banner of '150 plus'. The team was afforded prime responsibility for overseeing savings to meet these reductions. They quickly identified the need for a new policing model, based on the fact that significant reductions in officers and staff would be required to meet the new budget. It was evident that the existing geographical model would not remain fit for purpose with such reductions in resources.
- 1.3 Early financial modeling identified that the new policing model would operate with around 160 fewer police officers and 57 fewer police staff. The project objectives were broadly as follows:
 - To conduct a review of Local Policing and Protective Services, with particular emphasis placed on the services delivered to the public at District and Borough level.
 - To define policing services and to develop a future vision based on affordable, acceptable, and sustainable principles to be delivered across the County.
 - To consider opportunities for regional collaboration of policing services.
 - To consider and develop proposals for a future policing model, which is affordable, acceptable, and sustainable.
- 1.4 The principles that were developed to frame the new model were:
 - A focus on protection
 - Guaranteed Local Policing
 - The right policing response

- Removal of duplication
- A single workforce

1.5 Changes to Neighbourhood Policing were inevitable, but the importance of delivering protection and putting communities first was at the forefront of every decision made. The overall strategic objective for these changes was to enhance current Neighbourhood Policing by creating a single structure that delivers Community Policing from Force to Neighbourhood level. This was underpinned by a number of recommendations:

- Retain the current neighbourhood boundaries within a new single force management structure.
- The work of the Community Protection Department will be integrated into the new neighbourhood policing structure.
- Create a capability within the new neighbourhood structure to focus on Offender Management, anti-social behaviour, and crime trends; dealing with offenders visibly at a local level.
- Retain dedicated Safer Neighbourhood Teams that focus on problem solving in partnership.
- Integrate the Police Specials structure into the Neighbourhood Policing Department and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.
- Rationalise the current estate to align it to the requirements of the safer neighbourhoods structure.

1.6 The new model for policing Warwickshire went live on May 9th 2011. This included changes to Neighbourhood Policing and the current position is detailed in this report.

2.0 Structure of the Neighbourhood Policing Model

2.1 Warwickshire Police has 33 Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs), supervised by a number of Police Sergeants. Each SNT is a mixed workforce, comprising of a Beat Manager (Police Constable), Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), Special Constables, and volunteers.

2.2 In addition, there is a Neighbourhood Protection Team, which is a Force asset focusing on harm reduction through proactive working and managing offenders. This team comprises of an Inspector, 4 Sergeants, and 36 Constables. It is also aligned to the Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO) Management Team, Youth Offending Team (YOT), and the Warrants Department.

2.3 Finally, Neighbourhood Policing includes the Community Protection Team, Firearms Licensing Team, and Camera Enforcement Unit. The Community Protection Team is led by a civilian manager and comprises licensing officers, crime prevention officers, an architectural liaison officer, a drugs intervention officer, and a watch scheme officer.

A chart showing the Neighbourhood Policing structure for Warwickshire is shown at Appendix A.

3.0 Estate

3.1 In order to reduce costs Warwickshire Police has reviewed its current estate and a number of changes are taking place that will ultimately see a reduction in the number of buildings that are used. Neighbourhood Policing has been part of this review and local officers are now located at a number of sites across the County to ensure that the maximum amount of their duty time is actually spent in their respective neighbourhoods with local communities.

3.2 The areas below are where Warwickshire Police will have Safer Neighbourhood Team deployment under the new policing model:

Stratford	within existing police station
Shipston/Wellesbourne	new Safer Neighbourhood Office (SNO) in Shipston
Alcester	new SNO
Southam	within existing police station
Leamington	within justice centre
Warwick	new SNO
Kenilworth	new SNO
Rugby	within existing police station
Nuneaton	within justice centre
Bedworth	within existing police station
Coleshill	new SNO
Atherstone	new SNO
Wolston	existing Safer Neighbourhood Office
Keresley	existing Safer Neighbourhood Office

These buildings provide a mixed level of services that are available to the public, in accordance with the Force Estates Strategy.

A map depicting the future Warwickshire Policing Estate is shown at Appendix B.

4.0 Service delivery

4.1 The aim of Neighbourhood Policing in Warwickshire is to protect communities from harm, by working with partners and the public, to deliver an effective and efficient policing service at a neighbourhood level.

The role of Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) is:

- Problem solving
- Community Engagement
- Offender Management
- Be identifiable, accessible, and responsive

4.2 It is crucial that SNT officers and staff are visible and engage with communities. They must listen to what the public are saying, determine what their concerns are and deal with problems to deliver protection and ensure community cohesion. This approach is the foundation to Neighbourhood Policing and a number of changes have been made so that SNT officers and staff are effective and efficient in this area. These are captured below:

- SNT officers no longer 'carry' an investigative caseload, unless particular crimes are related to a community problem (priority) that they are trying to solve.
- SNT officers are no longer required to be the first response to 'routine' incidents that are reported in their neighbourhood. SNT officers will respond to 'emergency' incidents where they are the nearest and most appropriate resource.
- SNT officers are no longer abstracted from their neighbourhoods to perform tasks that take them away from their local communities.
- SNT officers now work a regulation shift pattern, which means that they are on duty for more days throughout the year.
- A number of Safer Neighbourhood Offices (SNOs) have been established across the County. SNT officers are based at these locations, which means that they are operating within or close to their relevant neighbourhoods.
- SNT officers now have the facility to 'self-brief' and are the subject of 'targeted' deployment.
- The introduction of 'mobile data technology'.
- The increased use of mobile police stations and pedal cycles.
- Specials are now dedicated (posted) to work with SNTs.
- Recruitment and increased use of volunteers (including Specials) dedicated (posted) to work with SNTs.
- Improved SNT websites.
- Greater use of social media, e.g. Twitter.

5.0 Post Implementation Review

- 5.1 In general, there has been little negative feedback from communities about the introduction of the new policing model. Many people are unaware or disinterested in the fact that the Force has undergone a major restructure. Instead, they tend to focus on the service that they receive, namely, police response and whether local issues are addressed to their satisfaction.
- 5.2 The risks of negative public perception around the significant reduction of SNT officers and the closure of some police enquiry offices and community contact points have been negated by the fact that those remaining officers and staff now have the ability to concentrate solely on local engagement and problem solving.
- 5.3 Safer Neighbourhood Teams have improved their level of engagement with local communities. This has been achieved through dedicated staff having the opportunity to focus on neighbourhood policing within their communities. There is also a greater emphasis placed upon officers 'going' to communities, rather than communities 'coming' to them. Data shows that officers are spending more time in their neighbourhoods, and the advantages of social networking sites, for instant communication, are beginning to materialise. This was particularly evident during the recent civil disorder where officers were able to reassure local communities and quell damaging rumours before they spread.
- 5.4 All Safer Neighbourhood Teams have continued to identify community priorities (problems) that they are committed to dealing with and solving. Specific priorities

and police activities are agreed at Community Forums, but SNTs are actively involved on a daily basis in the acquisition of information to enhance this task. Officers are now sharing a greater volume of information with communities and are more focused on the outcomes that their hard work has delivered. Performance in this area continues to flourish.

- 5.5 The risk of negative perceptions from partnerships at the withdrawal from a Boroughs and Districts policing model has not materialised. There has been some change, but the work of the Neighbourhood Chief Inspectors and Beat Managers is minimising any lasting issues. Any confusion between the role of Beat Manager and Neighbourhood Sergeant has now been resolved and there is evidence that Beat Managers are providing excellent engagement at local partnership level. The introduction of the SNT Beat Manager role is seen as a success within the Neighbourhood Policing model.
- 5.6 SNTs work closely with the Community Protection Team (CPT) and a number of functions previously delivered by the CPT have been mainstreamed (or part mainstreamed), e.g. community cohesion, crime prevention.
- 5.7 The Neighbourhood Protection Team (NPT) has been reinforced as a Force resource that undertakes 'higher harm' tasks. The NPT has 'ownership' for offenders as part of Integrated Offender Management, but all staff have a responsibility to contribute to this process. The team also provides specialist support to other business areas, such as public order, search, prison recalls, warrants, etc. With the NPT being focused on 'higher harms', SNTs have to be more creative when determining resources to resolve longer-term community issues (problems).
- 5.8 The new SNT structure permitted only one regular warranted officer (Beat Manager) per team. Therefore, in order to maintain levels of capacity, the recommendation was to align all Special Constables to SNTs. This approach was relaxed slightly for some Specials with specialist skills, but most of the 224 officers were assigned to Neighbourhoods and required to perform a minimum number of hours with SNTs before volunteering to support other business areas. For some Specials, this was an unpopular move because they did not join Warwickshire Police to solely perform a community officer role. By being so prescriptive, the Force alienated a large section of its warranted workforce and inadvertently placed obstacles in the way of Specials working towards independent patrol.
- 5.9 As a result, the deployment of Specials is currently being reviewed against the new policing model. Interim arrangements may be agreed for those Specials currently working with the Force, but the recommendation remains that all future Specials, joining Warwickshire Police, will be allocated to an SNT and work in Neighbourhood Policing. The Special Constabulary is a valuable asset to Warwickshire Police and the contribution made by its officers in delivering protection is outstanding. This was particularly evident during the recent events of civil disorder when officers from the Special Constabulary worked extended hours and performed additional duties.
- 5.10 Volunteers are a cost effective 'value-added' resource and their actual cost amounts to £254 each per year (including expenses). They cannot be used to replace staff who have vacated their post through redundancy or whose post has been disestablished. Therefore, volunteers can perform any role, but not any job.

Warwickshire Police currently employs 47 'public service volunteers' and 27 of them work within Neighbourhood Policing. There is no question that volunteers deliver an excellent 'value added' cost effective service and plans for future recruitment are in place.

6.0 Safer Neighbourhood Teams Audit

6.1 In November 2011 Warwickshire County Council's Risk and Assurance Services completed an internal audit regarding the key risks associated with the governance and performance of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

The scope of the audit included the following areas:

- Strategy, Policy and Procedures
- Participation with Community Forum Panels
- Communication, Engagement and Participation
- Priorities, Targets and Tasks

6.2 The key findings from the audit were as follows:

- Policy, structural documentation, job descriptions, and role profiles have not been fully updated to reflect the introduction of the new policing model.
- Full and appropriate participation is not achieved for community meetings and/or identification and setting of local priorities.
- Standard communication routines are not in place and there is no formal process for vetting publicity information prior to its issue.

6.3 As a result, key actions to be addressed are shown below:

- Safer Neighbourhoods policy structure charts, job descriptions, and role profiles should be reviewed, authorised, and re-issued to reflect arrangements since the introduction of the new policing model.
- Participation of relevant bodies and groups should be targeted and tasking meetings should be re-introduced in order to identify and set local priorities.
- Standard approach should be undertaken for the publication of publicity information and this should be incorporated within a communication policy and plan.

6.4 The findings of the audit come as no surprise bearing in mind that it was completed only 6 months after the introduction of the 'new' Neighbourhood Policing plan. It proved useful in confirming the current position of Neighbourhood Policing with the majority of issues classified as 'low' risk and no 'high' risk concerns being identified. Warwickshire Police has been through significant change in the last 12 months and it is anticipated that further change will take place as it enters a strategic alliance with West Mercia Police. It is far too early to say what that change may be, but caution needs to be applied to reviewing and rewriting policy and procedural documents, that, owing to change, could be out of date almost immediately.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The overall strategic objective regarding Neighbourhood Policing has been achieved, with action plans in place to address issues around offender management and the integration of Specials into the policing structure.
- 7.2 Neighbourhood Policing is seen across the organisation as one of the early successes of the 'new' model, despite the reduction in staff to one 'regular' Police Constable (Beat Manager) per Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- 7.3 Warwickshire Police are delivering Neighbourhood Policing differently and feedback suggests that it is working. Communities have reported greater visibility of Safer Neighbourhood Team officers and staff. Community engagement has increased and local issues are being solved efficiently and effectively. Neighbourhood Policing is performing a major role in the management of offenders, and staff are actively acquiring intelligence and information to inform policing activity.
- 7.4 The strategic alliance will undoubtedly provide the opportunity for further development with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness. Despite its successes, Neighbourhood Policing in Warwickshire will not stand still and will continue to look for improvements to deliver the best possible level of protection to communities, within the resources available.

Background Papers

None.

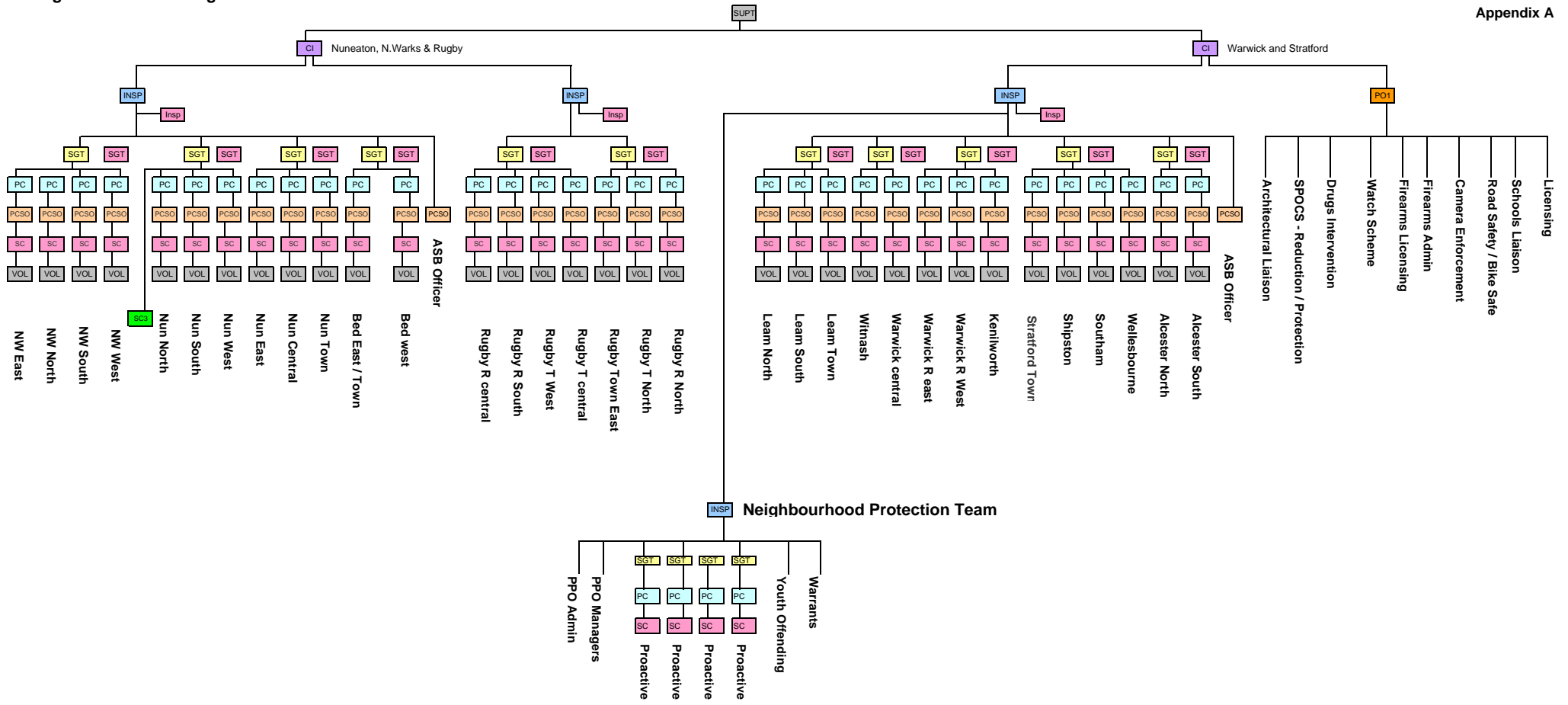
Appendices

Appendix A - Neighbourhood Policing Structure Chart

Appendix B - Estates Map

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Neighbourhood Policing Structure



Future Warwickshire Police Estate

