

The **POLICE AUTHORITY** met at **POLICE HEADQUARTERS, LEEK WOOTTON** on the **5 OCTOBER 2005**

Present:-

Philip Blundell (Independent Member) (**Chair**)
Ian Francis (Magistrate Member) (**Vice Chair**)

Independent Members:-

Brian Lowe
Dorrette McAuslan
John Rennie
Philip Robson

County Councillors:-

Chris Davis
Eithne Goode
Richard Hobbs
Katherine King
Philip Morris-Jones
Izzi Seccombe
Ray Sweet, BEM
John Vereker

Police:-

Chief Constable John Burbeck
Deputy Chief Constable Keith Bristow
Assistant Chief Constable Andy Parker
Assistant Chief Constable Bob Golding
Inspector Martin Samuel

Police Authority:-

Greta Needham
Tony Brown
Sarah Meyrick
Nigel Stott
Claire Thomas
Ann Mawdsley

1. **General**

The Chair opened the special meeting of the Police Authority and welcomed visitors Councillors Alan Farnell and Jerry Roodhouse to the meeting. Members of the Authority agreed that the visiting County Councillors be invited to remain to observe the confidential discussion.

(1) **Apologies**

were received from Mike Edwards, Mota Singh, June Tandy and Alan Woodward

(2) **Declaration of Members' Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

Brian Lowe and John Rennie declared a personal interest as members of the Warwickshire Neighbourhood Watch.

2. **Reports Containing Exempt Information**

Resolved:-

That the members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the following agenda items on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act 1972.

3. **Police Force Reform**

The Chair outlined the procedure that would be followed in the meeting and noted the gratitude of members of the Police Authority to the officers of the Authority and the Force, for their hard work over the past weeks and days in keeping members of the Authority up to date on the Home Secretary's agenda for reform and the potential restructure of the Police Service.

Greta Needham presented the report of the Clerk to the Authority, which outlined the task ahead for Members, setting out the background, principles, issues and timescales outlined in the Home Secretary's proposals for police service restructuring in England and Wales.

During her presentation the following points were highlighted:

1. The agenda for reform was based on the principle that the current structure of 43 Police Forces was no longer fit for purpose and was not sufficiently robust to provide the necessary level of protective services demanded in the current climate.

2. The restructuring proposals amounted to the most significant of challenges for Warwickshire Police Service to be addressed within the shortest possible timescales. There was an urgent need to identify the most appropriate structural outcome for the communities of Warwickshire, that balances the demands facing contemporary society from terrorism and major crime alongside the imperative for strong local policing, with visible leadership and local accountability.
3. The key issues for Members were to identify which restructuring models best matched the design criteria set out by the Home Secretary and represented the best policing models for preserving localism as well as providing access to the full range of protection services.
4. The following issues need to be addressed:
 - i. An acknowledgement of the need to reform.
 - ii. Consideration of the options available in the light of professional policing advice.
 - iii. Community Engagement and Consultation issues.
 - iv. A Communications Strategy which addressed both joint and divergent approaches by the Authority and the Force.
 - v. Joint working arrangements with the Force to develop areas of common agreement.
 - vi. Consideration of identified models with other Authorities and Forces in the region.

The Chair thanked Greta Needham for her presentation.

John Burbeck then presented the police response to the significant challenge to date. He noted that this was an opportunity to get the policing structure for this part of the Midlands as right as possible for the next few decades, adding that the existing structure had been in operation for over 30 years and had problems. He felt that the reform had not come as a surprise for most people and was supported by most of the force, many of whom had been engaged in the debate on the capacity of the force to deal with serious criminality and greater problems such as terrorism. Warwickshire was vulnerable in all these areas as well as having a criminal market emanating from West Midlands, and had been in discussion with Coventry for some years looking for solutions.

He added that in creating a model police service, the following issues needed to be considered:

- i. The progress already made in developing local policing needed to be continued and rolled out over the next 12

months with neighbouring police teams known to local residents in place within two years.

- ii. Protective services needed to be available to deal with organised crime and major incidents.
- iii. Resources had to be brigaded in a more efficient and effective way, increasing value for money.
- iv. The regional strategic force concept offered the best solution, with an individual in charge to ensure fast, appropriate and effective policing.
- v. Warwickshire already worked co-terminously with other stakeholders such as Criminal Justice, Crown Court, YOT, Probation, Prison Service, Local Authorities, Health, Ambulance and Fire Service.
- vi. The four forces that would make up the suggested new strategic regional force were already involved in a number of partnerships, including:
 - Central Motorway Control Group
 - Regional Asset Recovery Team
 - Intelligence Cell
 - Middle-market

Warwickshire also currently shared an IT framework with West Midlands Force.

John Burbeck outlined the various models identifiable within the Home Secretary's parameters, taking into account the geography and links with neighbouring authorities and the positive and negative outcomes for Warwickshire within each. He added that the strategic principles that Warwickshire would want out of its preferred model would be:

- i. strong identifiable neighbourhood policing teams
- ii. local BCUs (to support neighbourhood policing teams)
- iii. local leadership with local accountability
- iv. Coventry and Warwickshire being under one command
- v. Improved governance of regional working
- vi. Maximised release of capabilities
- vii. A strategic force.

He emphasised that each of the four potential models required new governance arrangements, to ensure accountability at a strategic, sub-regional and local level and clarity on funding arrangements. The

fundamental principle behind any chosen model would have to have at its core improved policing for Warwickshire.

The Chair noted that the challenges of the past two weeks had brought with them a rollercoaster of emotions and thanked John Burbeck for his strong outline of the complex issues and serious challenges, and his professional view of the options that were available to Members. The Chair stated that the Police Authority members were all opposed to Warwickshire being 'swallowed up' by the West Midlands and had a clear duty and challenge to respond with the best way forward on behalf of the people of Warwickshire.

John Rennie noted that while he was sceptical about the proposals, the world had changed and there was a need to respond to issues such as terrorism. He added that Warwickshire had two choices; one was not to respond and the other to make the most of a 'dangerous opportunity' and move forward. He made the following points:

- i. Not making a response would be detrimental to Warwickshire.
- ii. It was crucial that their response was acceptable to Government, protective of the local policing position and included the collaboration of other stakeholders in the region.
- iii. The position of Chief Constable was ancient and venerable and one that meant something to people in Warwickshire. It was vital to have a figurehead in the role of a chief executive who could be held to account and had a degree of autonomy within the sub-region.

Philip Morris-Jones noted that skill and haste would be required in order to carry out the community consultation in the limited time available. The Authority would need to sell an agreed opinion to the public showing clear and definite dividends and guaranteeing an improvement for policing in Warwickshire. The public would also need to be reassured that if Warwickshire was to join with Coventry, that the increased rates of crime in Coventry would not impact on rural policing.

Ian Francis stated that taking a "standback" view and looking at what had happened to services such as fire, ambulance, health and education there was a need to put Warwickshire policing into that context. He added that he supported the regional/sub-regional approach with emphasis on the following two issues:

- i. Local accountability was a key issue to all people in the region.
- ii. Names and titles were very significant, regardless of whether the implications were factual or perceptual.

Izzi Seccombe made the following points:

- i. Reorganisation had been carried out in a number of services, including health, fire and the armed forces. Naming and badging of individuals and teams were built up over a long period of time and to merely scrap these would have detrimental consequences.
- ii. If the role of the Serious Organisation Crime Agency was to be only strategic, the costs of the operational side would be fed down on a regional basis and diffused down to possibly impact on Council tax. John Burbeck confirmed that the Agency would only be operational at a national and international level and that the extra capacity would have to be resourced through an extra Government grant or increased capacity locally.

Richard Hobbs noted that it was unfortunate that the West Midlands Force and the West Midlands Region carried the same name. He added that of the options considered, any option leaving West Mercia or Staffordshire as forces on their own would not be viable. He noted that the regional working of the fire service had shown both advantages and disadvantages, the largest disadvantage being that there was no single body or person with single control resulting in masses of paperwork.

John Vereker requested that the option of a greater Warwickshire including Coventry and Solihull be kept on the table.

The Chair replied that the solution of a greater Warwickshire had been his preference early on in the process, but if a solution was put to Government of a new strategic regional/sub-regional force made up from Warwickshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and West Midlands, supported by the four authorities and four forces, that this would be a strong argument that would be difficult for Government to resist. This model would then allow for Warwickshire and Coventry to be jointly policed within a sub-region.

Chris Davis thanked John Burbeck for a good, professional presentation. He noted that he had already had some discussion with local residents whose main concerns were to have local, CBO level good protection. He raised the following concerns:

- i. The truncated timescale for a regional agenda.
- ii. The lack of determination of accountability and role for Police Authorities in general.
- iii. The impact on council tax.

Philip Robson noted the importance of understanding the process and the inevitability of the next stage. He felt the Police Force Reform was the

next stage of a grand plan of Government and to ignore it would be perilous. It was important to put forward a good argument taking into account the following concerns:

- i. The building blocks such as Crime and Disorder Partnerships, BCUs and Neighbourhood Watches were crucial to the success of any proposal.
- ii. Voluntary collaboration simply did not work as it took up too much administration and officer time and was dependent on goodwill.
- iii. There was a need for increased sophistication to achieve structural change.
- iv. The regional tiered approach was good so long as local interests were protected and it was clear who determined the funding, where it was raised and how it was deployed.
- v. The reform proposals presented the Police Authority with opportunities and many dangers, but a joined up approach from the four West Midlands Authorities/Forces would have a better chance of success than going it alone.

Dorrette McAuslan thanked the County Council and Police Force for their presentations outlining the pros and cons of different options. She noted her concern that the letter from the Home Secretary dated 22 September appeared to outline options when decisions had clearly already been made. She highlighted the following concerns:

- i. There was not enough time to give people a number of options to think about and respond to and so the Authority would need to select the best option to consult on.
- ii. The role and the position of Police Authorities and the representation of local people had not been made clear by Government. She noted that within the West Midlands Police Authority, Coventry had only one member which resulted in a diminished role, and losses financially and in service quality.
- iii. Small sub-regions who did not have strength on large monolithic bodies would always lose out financially as all regions felt that the needs of their own people were paramount.
- iv. There were a number of police forces bordering Warwickshire. When making decisions, if the Government did not accept recommendations of Warwickshire and these bordering forces, would the Government make their own decisions and how would these impinge on Warwickshire?

Ray Sweet stated that Warwickshire should be on the inside fighting their corner and setting their own agenda. He agreed that the regional/sub-regional approach would fit well with Warwickshire but that it was

paramount to preserve local policing and communities needed to feel confident and protected.

Brian Lowe noted his support for the full regional model. He added that the current governance of Neighbourhood Watch was based on a support structure and experience had shown that it was important that links be maintained between the top structure and local needs and that there was focus and direction with good local representation.

John Rennie noted that he would take the following representations to the APA Futures Group:

1. There would be a compelling argument against the directive not to split forces if lines were drawn joining together Warwickshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and West Midlands and all four Forces/Authorities stood together.
2. Governance had to be clear and there was a need to continue with the Police Authority to ensure governance at the sub-regional level and to continue with the BCU governance level.
3. Set up costs involved where there was disaggregation and re-joining of forces were always considerable.

Tony Brown informed Members that the community engagement proposals had three underpinning strategies and that it was important that all groups worked together on consultation and recognised the different groups of consultees. He welcomed any advice that Members had on who should be consulted and how this should be done. He added that there was a detailed framework from which the consultation would be delivered, and it was important that this was properly delivered and responses were accurately recorded.

The Chair agreed that it was key that local decisions be made locally and reiterated the following points:

1. Naming and badging were crucial.
2. Funding was crucial, both in terms of where it was raised and how it was fed down.
3. The fundamental important of effective Governance and accountability and how these would be managed.
4. There was a need for local accountability to ensure local ownership of decisions about local matters.

It was then Resolved:-

That Members:

- (1) Note the background, parameters and process set out by the Home Secretary for restructuring police forces.**
- (2) Support the establishment of joint working arrangements, between the Police Authority and the Force with a view to developing, wherever possible, a common strategy to address all aspects of the restructuring agenda, whilst recognising the lead roles of the Force on professional delivery of policing and the Authority on governance and accountability, and engagement and communication with the local community.**
- (3) Note the limited options available to Warwickshire that currently appear to be available within the strict design criteria set out by the Home Secretary in his letter of 22 September.**
- (4) Support the Authority and Force continuing to work together on a range of options that meet the Home Secretary's requirements, whilst recognising that at this stage no options are closed off.**
- (5) Support the proposals contained within the report for consultation and communication with local communities (including new details as they emerge and are agreed).**
- (6) Support close contact with the other Authorities and Forces in the West Midlands region in addressing the restructuring agenda, with a view to identifying, wherever possible, areas of common agreement in preparing the shortlist of options for change to be submitted to the Home Secretary by 31 October.**
- (7) Request a further meeting to consider the proposed shortlist of options for change, prior to the submission by Warwickshire to the Home Secretary.**
- (8) Note that the County Council has invited the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority, the Chief Constable and the Deputy Chief Constable to its meeting on 11 October to consider the reform proposals, and recognise the importance of all elected members on the Authority attending to take part in this debate.**

- (9) Authorise the Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to take whatever action is necessary to progress the principles agreed at this meeting.**

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Chair of the Authority

The meeting closed at 11.55 am