

WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of Warwickshire County Council held on 11 October 2005

Present:

Councillor Gordon Collett (Chair)

Councillors John Appleton, Peter Barnes, Sarah Boad, David Booth, Ken Browne, John Burton, Les Caborn, Tom Cavanagh, Alan Cockburn, Jose Compton, Chris Davis, Jill Dill-Russell, Richard Dodd, Michael Doody, Alan Farnell, Anne Forwood, Eithne Goode, Colin Hayfield, John Haynes, Marion Haywood, Martin Heatley, Bob Hicks, Richard Hobbs, Mick Jones, Katherine King, Nina Knapman, Joan Lea, Bryan Levy, Barry Longden, Anita Macaulay, Helen McCarthy, Phillip Morris-Jones, Brian Moss, Tim Naylor, Mike Perry, Raj Randev, John Ross, Chris Saint, Izzi Seccombe, Dave Shilton, Kam Singh, Mota Singh, Ian Smith, Mick Stanley, Ray Sweet, B.E.M., June Tandy, Heather Timms, Sid Tooth, John Vereker, C.B.E. and John Wells.

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors George Atkinson, Richard Chattaway, Peter Fowler, Richard Grant, Pat Henry, Richard Hyde, Bernard Kirton, Frank McCarney, Jerry Roodhouse, Bob Stevens and John Whitehouse.

(2) Member's Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

The following councillors disclosed personal interests as members of the Warwickshire Police Authority:

Councillors: Chris Davis, Eithne Goode, Richard Hobbs, Katherine King, Phillip Morris-Jones, Izzi Seccombe, Mota Singh, Ray Sweet and John Vereker.

2. Police Force Reform

Introduction

The Chair welcomed Philip Blundell, Chair of the Warwickshire Police Authority; Ian Francis, Vice-Chair of the Police Authority; John Burbeck, Chief Constable and Keith Bristow, Deputy Chief Constable and thanked them and Members for attending this extraordinary meeting of the Council.

The following documents had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting:

- (1) A map of the current police structure in England and Wales.
- (2) A report from the Clerk to the Police Authority considered at a special meeting of the Police Authority on 5 October 2005. This explained the Home Secretary's agenda for reform, based on the principle that the current structure of 43 police forces is 'no longer fit for purpose' and that larger strategic forces are required. The process and timetable for reform was also set out in this paper along with a proposed framework for consulting, engaging and informing local communities.
- (3) A copy of the Clerk's slides used in a presentation to the Police Authority.
- (4) Notes of the meeting of the Police Authority held on 5 October and the resolutions of that meeting.
- (5) A briefing paper from the Chief Constable, which included the Home Secretary's requirements for reform, Warwickshire Police Strategic Principles and a review of options.
- (6) A briefing note from the Clerk to the Police Authority and County Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive setting out the constitutional and related implications for Warwickshire.

Philip Blundell advised the Council of the position reached so far within the Police Authority and John Burbeck presented an analysis of the options available to Warwickshire from a professional policing perspective and falling within the Home Secretary's parameters for restructuring.

This was followed by a full debate and agreement of the Council's initial response to the proposals. The key points are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Philip Blundell, Chair of the Warwickshire Police Authority

Philip Blundell assured the Council that, although he had not yet formed a view of what successful police re-structuring in Warwickshire will look like, he was clear that the changes will have failed if the people of Warwickshire feel less in control of their local police service. He explained that his view of policing was that it was a tripartite responsibility:

- National Government – driven by the Home Secretary seeking to address important policing issues.
- The police force – doing their best as professionals.
- Local governance – ensuring governance and accountability of the police service on behalf of local communities

The Chair emphasised that he would be listening carefully to the views put forward in this first major consultation. His focus was the service to the

people of Warwickshire and he considered there was a duty to protect what is already working well but also to seize opportunities to make improvements at all levels.

The Chair advised that the Police Authority (in conjunction with other forces and authorities in the region, the criminal justice agencies and local government partners) was required to submit an initial shortlist of options to the Home Office by the end of October. A detailed cost-benefit analysis of those shortlisted options and identification of a preferred option would be undertaken in November with a final report to the Home Office by 23 December 2005. It was envisaged that the Home Secretary would produce his response to options and plans by Spring 2006 with a view to implementation by April 2008.

John Burbeck, Chief Constable

John Burbeck prefaced his presentation by reminding the Council that the current policing of Warwickshire was challenging, with the force being particularly stretched if called upon to respond to large scale and/or extraordinary incidents. The change in the type, scale and globalisation of crime, meant that some restructuring of the police service was necessary and he supported the Home Secretary's view that strategic police forces were required that were capable of dealing with the demands of modern policing.

John Burbeck gave the following presentation:

Key protective activities

The force has the following categories of activities:

- major crime (homicide)
- serious, organised & cross border crime
- counter-terrorism & extremism
- civil contingencies & emergency planning
- critical incidents
- public order
- strategic roads policing

Modern police service

The force was organised on the principles of the:

- development of local and neighbourhood policing
- provision of protective services to national standards
- organisation of affordable support services & strategic development

Home Secretary's Requirements

The Home Secretary has stated that:

- strategic forces offer the best long-term business solution
- new arrangements should not subdivide existing force areas
- new arrangements should not cross Government Office regional boundaries
- the proposals should be based on a design criteria – as set out below

Design Criteria

- size (4000 officers / 6000 total staff) (*a force of a size similar to that of West Yorkshire*)
- mix of capability & reduction in risk
- criminal markets
- geography
- co-terminosity
- identity
- clarity of command/control/ accountability
- performance
- costs and efficiency

Structural context

Four tiers of policing are being developed:

- neighbourhood policing at community level
- basic command units (BCUs) to support Neighbourhood Policing
- strategic force to assist BCUs by providing protective services and support services
- national agencies - Serious and Organised Crime Agency and National Police Improvement Agency

The Chief Constable advised that Warwickshire had already developed some neighbourhood teams and would be rolling these out across the County. These would be countrywide in line with the reforms so that everyone would have access to a team by 2008. The aim was for these to be recognisable locally, with every resident and business being able to access their team.

Strategic principles

Warwickshire Police aims to have:

- strong identifiable Neighbourhood Policing
- local policing delivered through basic command units
- Coventry & Warwickshire policed by the same force
- local leadership and accountability through
 - BCUs of Coventry and Warwickshire in Sub Region/Strategic Command

–sub regional/strategic commander (chief police officer level)

- improved governance of regional working
- maximised release of capacity
- a strategic force at regional level for protective services

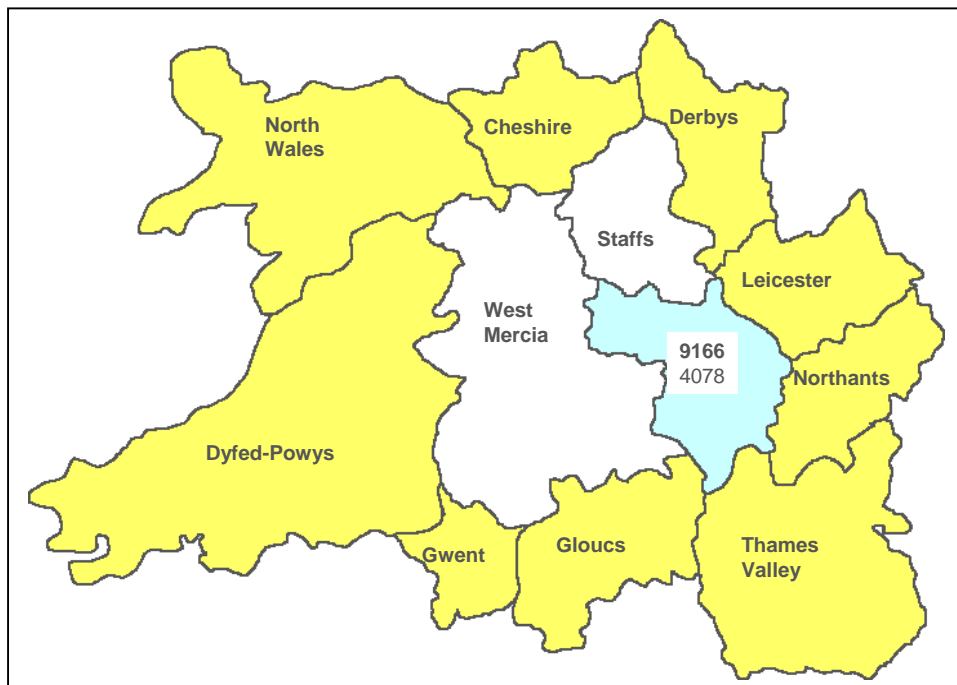
The principles recognised that Coventry is a net exporter of crime to Warwickshire and that any new structure should therefore combine Warwickshire and Coventry at a sub-regional level. The need for improved governance of regional working was also recognised. John Burbeck reminded the Council that the current considerable collaboration arrangements in the West Midlands region have worked well because of the goodwill of partners. The proposed reforms presented an opportunity to ensure robust governance.

Structure Options

John Burbeck outlined the options and explained that there was a need to consider whether each option complies with the Home Secretary's requirements and improves policing in Warwickshire in line with the Warwickshire force strategic principles.

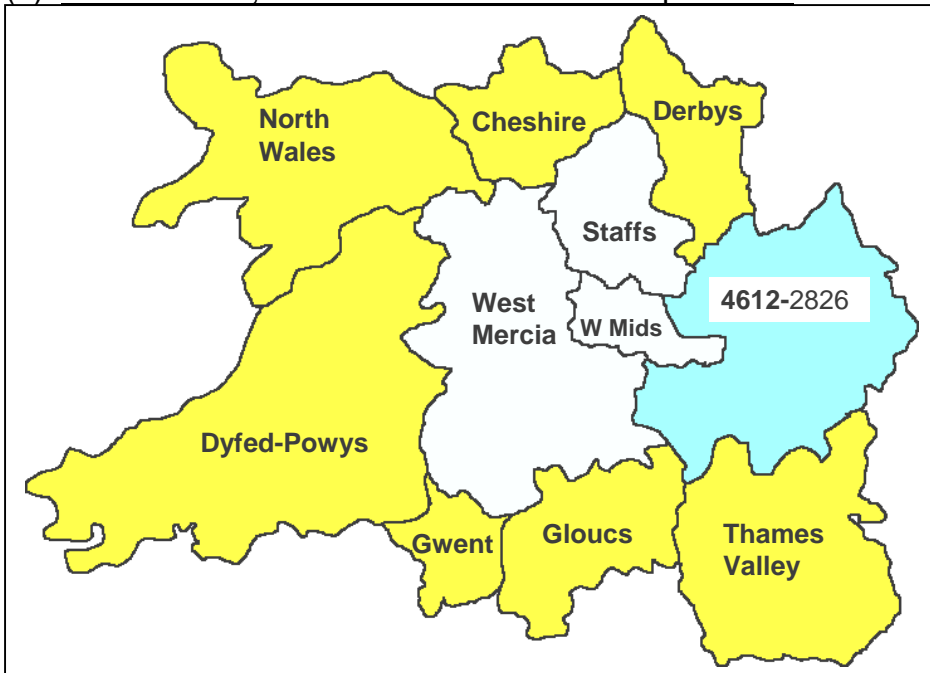
The areas proposed in each option are those with staffing numbers (police in bold and other staff in normal type):

(1) Warwickshire and West Midlands



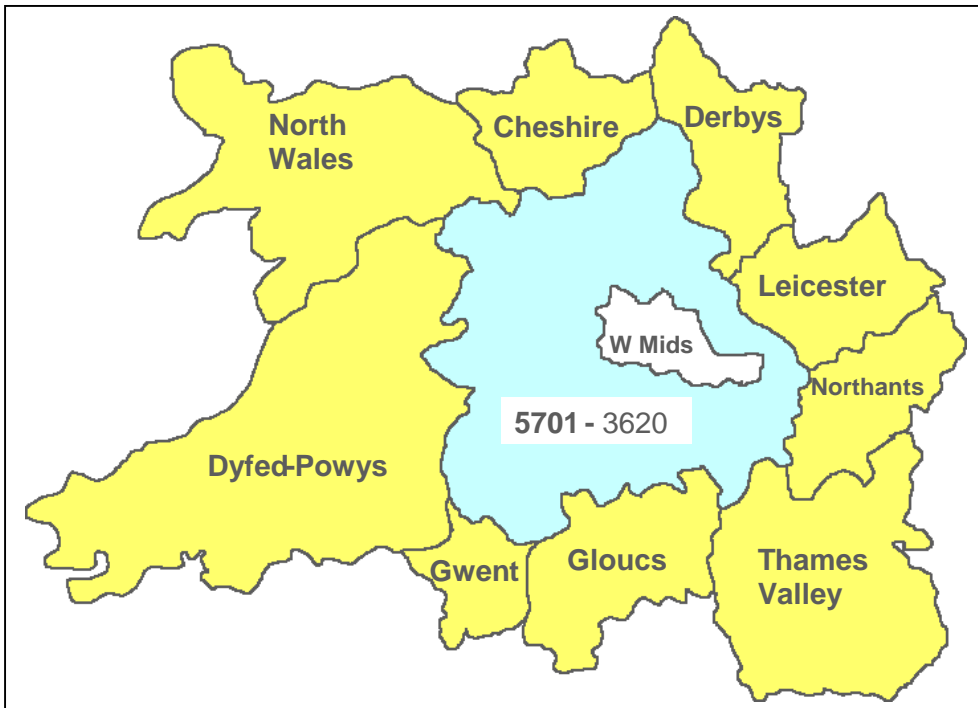
This option would comply with Home Secretary's requirements and would mean that Coventry and Warwickshire would be policed by the same force.

(2) Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Northamptonshire



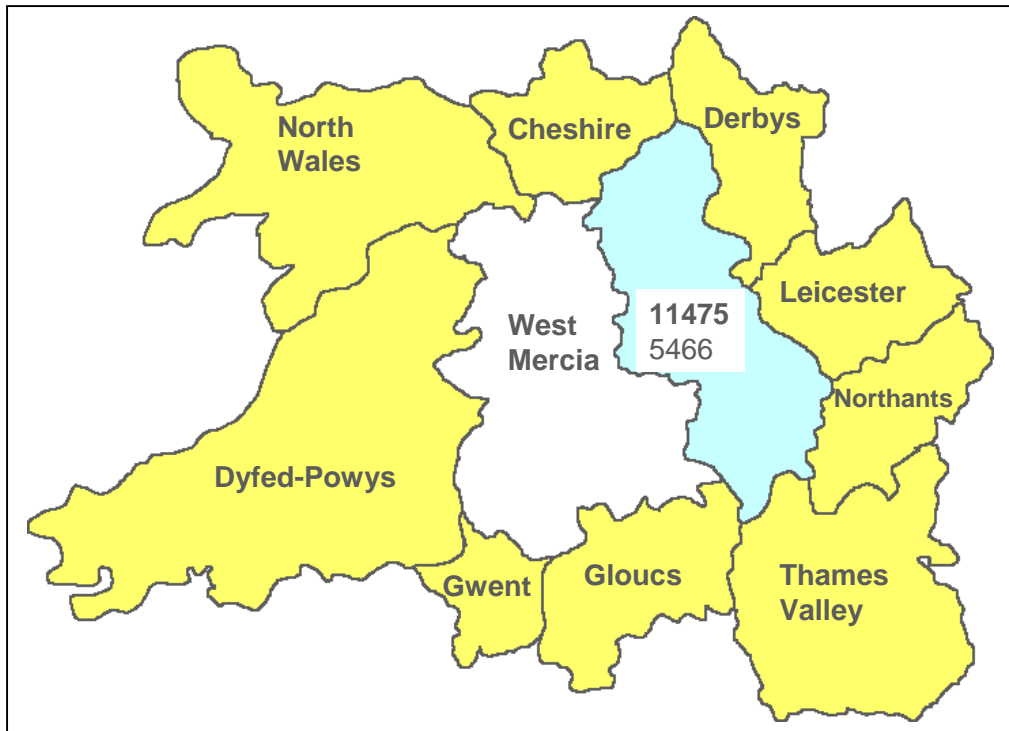
This option is not compliant with Home Secretary's requirements as the areas cross Regional Government boundaries. It would also mean that Coventry and Warwickshire would not be policed by the same force and would impact on existing regional collaboration and partnerships.

(3) Warwickshire, Staffordshire and West Mercia



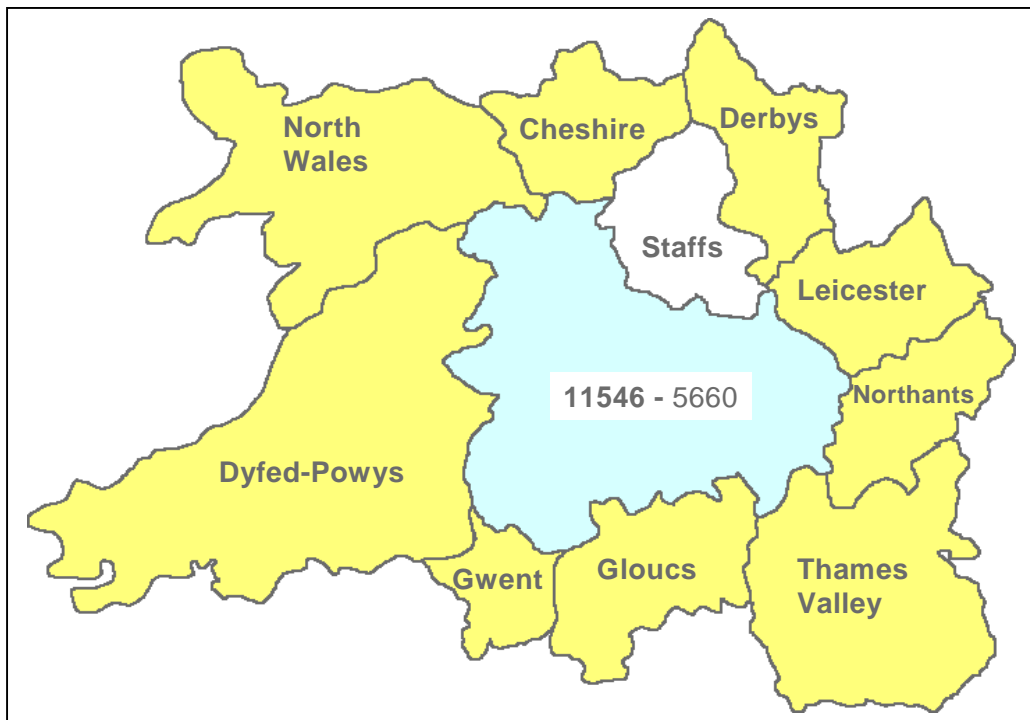
This 'doughnut' option is compliant with the Home Secretary's requirements but would be difficult operationally. Coventry and Warwickshire would not be policed by the same force and there are logistical issues caused by the geography.

(4) Warwickshire, Staffordshire and West Midlands



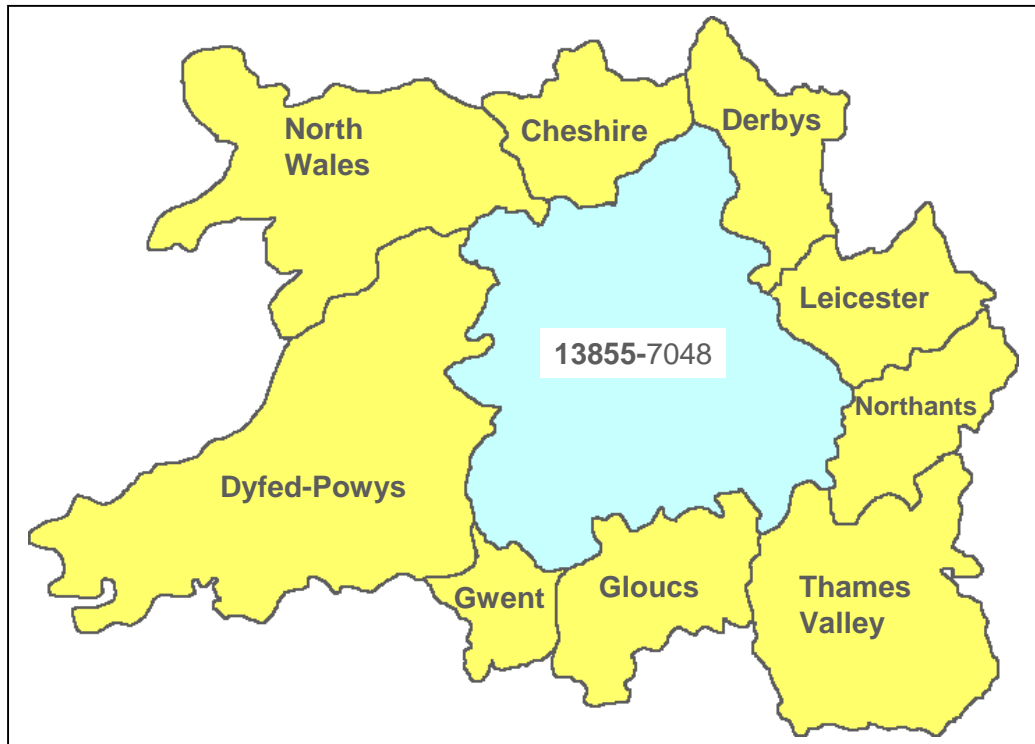
This option complies with Home Secretary requirements and Coventry and Warwickshire would be policed by the same force.

(5) Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands



The model complies with Home Secretary requirements and Coventry and Warwickshire would be policed by the same force.

(6) Warwickshire, Staffordshire, West Mercia and West Midlands



This option brings all forces together (so Coventry and Warwickshire would be policed by the same force) and meets the Home Secretary requirements. It would result in a force approximately the third of the size of the Metropolitan Police.

Preferred options

New strategic force formed by Warwickshire working with one of the following:

- West Midlands - (1) above
- Staffordshire and West Midlands – (2) above
- West Mercia and West Midlands – (3) above
- Staffordshire, West Mercia and West Midlands – (6) above

All of these options would require command at sub-strategic level, resulting in five tiers of policing:

- Neighbourhood Policing at community level
- BCUs to support Neighbourhood Policing
- Sub Regional/Strategic Command – see role below
- Strategic Force to assist BCUs by providing protective services and support services
- National Agencies - Serious and Organised Crime Agency and National Police Improvement Agency

Role of sub regional/strategic commander

- Chief Police Officer
- Responsible & accountable for local policing delivered through BCUs
- Lead on partnership
- Monitor & manage performance
- Member of the Force Board (Top Team), reporting directly to the 'Commissioner' of the strategic force
- Senior User of protective services
- Commissions support services
- Representative at Force Strategic Tasking & Co-ordination Group
- Arbitrates on cross border operations
- Undertakes inspectorate role
- Line manages BCU Commanders

Accountability and Funding

There will be a need for arrangements for accountability and funding at regional/strategic level, sub regional/strategic level and at the local level (basic command units and neighbourhood policing teams).

The Chief Constable concluded that the fundamental principle for any restructure must be to improve policing in Warwickshire.

The Chair thanked Philip Blundell and John Burbeck for their presentations and for their clear and instructive contributions.

Council Debate

A Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones proposed the following motion and was seconded by Councillor John Vereker:

- “ (1) This Council regrets the loss of accountability and community identity that would result from the possible abolition of the Warwickshire Police Force.
- (2) This Council is concerned that local accountability should be maintained in order to deliver the policy of neighbourhood policing now being encouraged by both national government and local communities.
- (3) This Council requests those of its members who serve on Warwickshire Police Authority to explore further a possible option of recommending the forming of a sub-regional structure in which Warwickshire joins with Coventry as a semi-autonomous unit, subject to local governance arrangements, within a larger West Midlands* Strategic Police Force.”

**West Midlands region as defined by the Home Office.*

Councillor June Tandy proposed, and was seconded by Councillor Tim Naylor, that the meeting be adjourned. This was agreed and the meeting was adjourned at 10.50 a.m.

The meeting was resumed at 11.10 a.m.

Councillor Phillip Morris-Jones withdrew the motion at A above.

B Councillor Alan Farnell moved the following cross-party motion (and was seconded by Councillor June Tandy):

- “(1) This Council fears any potential loss of accountability and community identity that would result from the possible abolition of the Warwickshire police Force.
- (2) This Council believes that local accountability should be maintained in order to deliver the policy of neighbourhood policing now being encouraged by both national government and local communities.
- (3) This Council requests that the Chief Constable and Warwickshire Police Authority explore further a possible option of recommending the forming of a sub-regional structure in which Warwickshire joins with Coventry as a semi-autonomous unit, subject to local governance arrangements, within a larger West Midlands* Strategic Police Force. “

**West Midlands region as defined by the Home Office.*

Members recognised the drivers for change and supported an option that would bring Warwickshire and Coventry police forces together, in view of the cross border policing issues. The key concerns in any change were the retention of local accountability and ensuring effective local policing.

The key points of the debate are summarised below:

Changes in Policing

Members commented on the changes in the nature of crime over recent years, in particular the effect of greater mobility which enables criminals to travel distances, and across traditional police boundaries, to commit crime. There has also been increased globalisation of crime and growth of criminal networks. All of these changes have been assisted by greater ease of telecommunication. Technological advances have also brought new opportunities and ways of committing crime, as well as the benefits of new sophisticated methods of detection. A view was also expressed that the harnessing of high technological solutions was more relevant than just the number of police on the beat, in view of this changed nature of policing and the impracticability of providing total police cover.

Members reported that, albeit that there were new forms of crime, there remained concern amongst constituents that there was inadequate police presence and that local crime was not being tackled as effectively as it could if more resources were available.

There was agreement, however, that the public expected swift response to incidents and needed to feel confident that, when needed, the police will be consistently capable of providing an appropriate response.

Local level policing

Members recognised the potential benefits of a larger force, including increased access to resources and potential opportunities for increased operational flexibility – provided those resources were available at a local level. The view was expressed that a benefit from reform could be that it would allow the Police to concentrate resources downwards to the local level.

Members also questioned what ‘neighbourhood’ policing would mean in terms of area and population covered and sought assurance that this would be on a more local level than, say, district - area size.

Governance

This was viewed by Members as a key issue and concurred with the view put forward by members of the Police Authority that there was a need for local accountability to ensure local ownership of decisions about local matters under any revised structure.

The following aspects of governance were discussed:

- emphasis on the need for a sufficient level of member representation. The current Warwickshire arrangement worked well in that it enabled representation for communities from across all areas of the County
- the scope for delegating some policing decisions, monitoring and even some budgets to the local level, possibly through a service level agreement that would recognise priorities identified at the local level.

Funding

The issue of funding the setting up costs of any revised structure and for on-going funding was raised. It was recognised that there was major work to be done on the funding of both regional and sub-regional levels (and how these relate to each other).

Force identity

Members recognised that reform would result in new police forces across the country – rather than the ‘taking over’ of existing forces, but that there were

likely to be issues of identification. Naming and badging of revised structures would be important.

John Burbeck responded to the points raised during the debate and assured the Council that his priority would be to protect and build on the improvements already achieved by Warwickshire Police. He added that he was confident that the creation of a new regional strategic police force with a sub-regional structure and the necessary governance arrangements would protect and enhance local policing in a way that he could not do at present. Neighbourhood teams would tackle crime at a level and in a way that is not possible for a single beat officer. These teams will provide access and continuity of service and will be rolled out before any strategic force is in place.

Philip Blundell thanked the Council for its consideration of the issues and acknowledged and supported the importance of the two themes of local policing and accountability that had been forcefully expressed throughout the debate.

The Chair thanked all for their contributions to this significant debate.

Council resolution

The motion set out at B above was put to the vote and was agreed unanimously. The wording is repeated below for ease of reference:

Resolved

- “(1) This Council fears any potential loss of accountability and community identity that would result from the possible abolition of the Warwickshire Police Force.
- (2) This Council believes that local accountability should be maintained in order to deliver the policy of neighbourhood policing now being encouraged by both national government and local communities.
- (3) This Council requests that the Chief Constable and Warwickshire Police Authority explore further a possible option of recommending the forming of a sub-regional structure in which Warwickshire joins with Coventry as a semi-autonomous unit, subject to local governance arrangements, within a larger West Midlands* Strategic Police Force. “

**West Midlands region as defined by the Home Office.*

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

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Chair

