

Report on the Work of the Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Purpose

The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Panel with an update on some of the key meetings I have held and some of the major issues I have been dealing with since the last meeting of the Panel in June.

The report is presented under the five objectives set out in my Police and Crime Plan published in April 2013. Those objectives are:-

- To reduce crime and disorder
- To protect the public from harm
- To empower local communities to prevent crime and disorder
- To deliver an effective and efficient police service
- To respond to the Strategic Policing Requirement

2. Context and Overall Performance

A principal responsibility for me is to hold the Chief Constable to account for the operation of the Force. I have met the Chief Constable on a more or less weekly basis to review performance figures and to raise any issues of concern which have come to my attention from the figures, from local people or through national events or reports. The Chief Constable updates me on any major operation or development. I am pleased to report that overall the picture remains positive and where any of the data give cause for concern the Chief Constable has taken appropriate corrective action.

Every two months the meeting I have with the Chief Constable is conducted in public. As well as regular reports on performance at the bi-monthly meeting I receive a finance report including an update on the savings targets, and a report on police performance in the area in which the meeting is being held. In June, the meeting was held in Rugby; in September the meeting was held in Nuneaton Bedworth.

At both meetings the financial position was very positive with achievement of savings in advance of targets. A full report on the financial position and the Medium Term Financial Plan will be brought to the Panel in November.

I also consider reports from the Chief Constable on particular aspects of policing which we prioritise within the Police and Crime Plan. In June the report covered Business Crime and in September we discussed a further update on cybercrime.

Through my representation on the Local Criminal Justice Board I receive regular reports on the agencies involved in the Criminal Justice system including the Probation Service, the Youth Offending Team, the Courts service and the Crown Prosecution service. Generally, those figures too remain positive, but I will monitor carefully changes which are or will be impacting on all of those services.

3. Objective 1 : To Reduce Crime and Disorder

Members of the Panel will be aware that I took the decision to roll forward Community Safety Grants to the County Council and to Community Safety Partnerships for 2013 – 14 at the same level of expenditure. In addition, I have made one-off grants totalling around £270,000 to various projects, the vast majority of which were proposed or supported by Community Safety Partnerships. Under those arrangements I also made a grant of £25,000 to Neighbourhood Watch to develop their work and increase membership and a grant of £40,000 to the Probation Service exceptionally over two years to develop restorative justice programmes with adults similar to those successfully used with young people by the Youth Justice Service.

Business crime has been a focus in this period. I have met with representatives of the Business Crime Prevention Network and the representatives of the retail industry to discuss business crime in advance of the meeting in public with the Chief Constable in Rugby when I had requested a report on business crime.

I have also met representatives of the National Farmers Union and attended a seminar organised by the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners on rural crime.

I referred in the Police and Crime Plan to the importance I attached to the work of volunteers. I or my Deputy attended area meetings of Neighbourhood Watch. I have also gone out with Street Pastors in Stratford on a Saturday night and attended a commissioning event for new Street Pastors in Rugby. I am hugely appreciative of the work they do to defuse tension and prevent disorder and to provide care in our town centres.

Changes to Safer Neighbourhood Teams have been a subject for discussion with the Chief Constable. I believe that my decision to maintain the number of PCSOs at around 100 was the correct one. I receive only positive comments about PCSOs and complaints only when PCSOs change location. SNTs appear to have an impact on crime in the communities they serve and are generally well regarded.

I have already referred to the generally high performance of agencies working within the Criminal Justice System in Warwickshire. There is very good partnership working between those agencies and I am committed to ensuring that restructuring of those agencies does not adversely affect them. I am particularly mindful of the proposals from the Government in relation to Offender Management and the Probation Service, Transforming Rehabilitation. I have attended a number of meetings, locally and nationally, about the Government's proposals and have some concerns, particularly in relation to the timetable for change and to the ongoing work of the Probation Service in a time of rapid change.

4. Objective 2 : To Protect the Public From Harm

I agree with the Chief Constable that central to the aim of reducing crime is to prioritise and focus resources on high harm causers and on areas of high crime; the Policing Priority Areas. I have received a report on Operation X which seeks to address both those things and it is clear that the strategy makes a major contribution to reducing crime. I agreed when taking office to the funding of Operation X from underspends for 2013-2014 and I have agreed for the operation to continue at least until April 2015.

Domestic violence remains a priority for me and Warwickshire and I have twice visited the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to discuss their work. I have made grants to three projects working in this field. I was pleased to meet Dr. Ravi Thiara commissioned by the County Council to advise on a strategy to prevent violence against women and girls and applaud this initiative by the Council.

I have a responsibility for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children and I thought it important therefore to ensure as far as possible that our arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults as robustly as possible. I chaired a meeting of representatives of the statutory agencies involved in this area to look in particular at arrangements to prevent child sexual exploitation. I was reassured that we had good systems and collaboration in place whilst recognising that there is no room for complacency. We need to be constantly vigilant and working to improve the protection we offer. It is planned to return to this topic in the Autumn.

My office has become a member of the Warwickshire Racial Equality Partnership.

I am very pleased that the action plan which the Force have put in place to increase levels of satisfaction amongst victims of crime from minority ethnic communities has improved the picture, and levels of satisfaction are more than 90% and in line with figures for other monitored groups.

5. Objective 3 : To Empower Local Communities to Prevent Crime and Disorder

I have already referred to the grants made available to the Community Safety Partnerships. I have stressed the importance of CSPs in the Police and Crime Plan and either my Deputy or myself have sought to attend every meeting of the CSPs across the county.

Similarly, I have recognised in the Plan the role the Local Community Forums play in engaging with the public. Representatives of my office attended every Community Forum in the June round and my Deputy and I ourselves attended meetings.

In order to represent me at future Community Forums I have appointed volunteers to be known as Community Safety Ambassadors. These people will be my 'eyes and ears' at locality forums and will liaise closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, community organisations and leaders in their locality, in particular local councillors.

We have appointed 26 Community Safety Ambassadors to cover 28 of the Local Community Forum areas and am seeking to recruit volunteers for the two remaining areas. This is a new approach not tried elsewhere in the country. We will monitor carefully how it is working and will review the scheme in twelve months.

I have been pleased by the apparent success of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and the role that Police Community Support Officers play as part of the SNTs. The extension of the Safer Schools scheme whereby some PCSOs are attached to particular schools in West Mercia is an indicator of the success of this scheme initiated in Warwickshire. The scheme has been designed so that although the PCSO is attached to a school, the officer remains part of the SNT.

As I set out in my Plan there have been no redundancies amongst PCSOs and the number has not fallen below 100. Similarly the programme to recruit and retain more Special Constables is progressing. I have attended a number of attestations for new Special Constables, have taken part in a training exercise and have seen Special Constables in action in important operations. I am more than ever convinced of the important role these volunteers can play.

I am committed to engaging with young people and have asked the Early Intervention Service of the County Council to lead an Engagement Strategy with young people. The way that Strategy works I want to be shaped by the young people themselves. The Interim Chief Executive has met with officers of Early Intervention and with VOX, the County Youth Panel. I have met representatives of the Council myself and had a very lively and frank discussion with them which I have reported to the Chief Constable. VOX has appointed a sub-group to work with me to identify the priorities for young people in relation to community safety and an action plan to address them.

I have held a number of meetings to discuss the support given to victims and attended a number of conferences and workshops about the commissioning of support for victims which will become a responsibility of Police and Crime Commissioners from October 2014. This is a major change, the details of which are still to be clarified by Government. The timetable for change gives me some cause for concern.

Finally, I have continued to enjoy very strong support from officers and members in the County Council and District and Borough Councils. I believe the partnerships are very strong. I am grateful for the decision that I should be a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board (something which has not happened in other areas). I have held a useful meeting with the Chief Fire Officer of the Warwickshire Fire Service.

6. Objective 4 : Deliver an Efficient and Effective Police Service

A regular item on my agenda for my meetings with the Chief Constable is an update on the Strategic Alliance. The implementation of the new policing model will be completed by the end of September. Some further work is needed in some areas of the work of the Force. Discussions have now begun about the future direction of the Alliance.

At this stage both Chief Constables and both Police and Crime Commissioners have agreed that the priority is to allow the new policing model to 'bed down' and to seek to strengthen and deepen the Alliance. The Commissioner for West Mercia and I have agreed the importance of meeting on a more regular and frequent basis. A new model of Governance for the Alliance which recognises the Commissioners' responsibilities for the strategic direction of the two Forces and the Alliance has been agreed. The new Alliance Governance Group which I chair will have, as its first priority, to develop a new strategic plan for the Alliance to take us to the next elections for Police and Crime Commissioners in 2016 and beyond. There has been some discussion about merger of the two Forces. I have made clear that this cannot happen before 2016 and before there has been full consultation with communities and community leaders in Warwickshire.

A joint Audit and Risk Committee has been established which will cover the operations of both Forces, both Offices of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Alliance.

6.1 Second Stage Transfer

Members of the Panel may recall that I wrote regarding Second Stage Transfer in July, in which I set out a proposed way forward that I had agreed with the Commissioner for West Mercia. A copy of this letter is appended for ease of reference.

In brief, when Police and Crime Commissioners replaced Police Authorities, the staff of the Police Authority transferred to the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. This was known as the 'First Stage Transfer'. The legislation made provision for a 'Second Stage Transfer', that is the transfer of operational staff from the employment of the Police and Crime Commissioner to the Chief Constable, who already has direction and control of such staff. Commissioners were required by the Home Secretary to prepare a scheme of transfer detailing which staff would transfer to the Chief Constable and which would be retained by the Commissioner, under his direction and control, to enable him/her to carry out the Commissioner's statutory responsibilities.

In the unique circumstances of the Alliance, the Commissioner of West Mercia and myself wrote to the Home Secretary with the support of both Chief Constables to ask that exceptionally we should not be required to produce a transfer scheme and that we should maintain the status quo. The initial response from officials at the Home Office is that such an approach would not be acceptable. However, we have secured from the Policing Minister Damien Green MP an agreement that officers

from my office and that of the West Mercia Commissioner should meet with officials prior to a meeting with the Minister.

I remain concerned about the cost and disruption of the proposed Second Stage Transfer with the introduction of further change.

I have received positive comments from members of the Panel and would appreciate further comments and, if agreed, the support of the Panel for the approach I am proposing to take. If rejected by the Home Secretary then we will prepare a scheme which will transfer all civilian staff to the Chief Constable to avoid fragmentation of the service.

7. Objective 5 : Report to the Strategic Policing Requirement

The Strategic Policing Requirement was published in July 2012 by the Home Secretary. It sets out national threats and the capability that police forces across the country must maintain to allow 'mutual aid' and the ability to respond to terrorist threats, civil emergencies and public order events. For example, Officers from Warwickshire assisted in the policing of the G8 Summit in Northern Ireland as part of mutual aid arrangements with the Police Service of Northern Ireland. Costs of this deployment was met by Government and provided useful professional development for officers who took part.

I meet with the Chief Constable at which the Strategic Policing Requirement is a regular item. I have already referred to the schedule of regular meetings with the Commissioner in West Mercia. I also attend regional meetings of Commissioners and Chief Constables to discuss cross border crime, counter terrorism and the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU). The ROCU is managed by West Midlands Police on behalf of the region. It has been agreed that new governance arrangements for the ROCU should be put in place to ensure oversight by all four Commissioners in the West Midlands region.

An important development for police forces across the county has been the establishment of the National Police Air Service to replace the helicopters used by individual forces. I am a member of the Board of NPAS on behalf of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners which has enabled me to ensure at least as good a service for Warwickshire and the other police forces as well as significant savings.

This is a good example of where Commissioners working together can influence policy and achieve improvements and savings. It is why I am a member of the Board of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and Leader of the Independent group of PCCs.

Cybercrime has for some time been a concern of mine and awareness of the growth of internet fraud and cyber bullying has grown nationally. This is an area of crime which is growing significantly with often devastating effects for its victims. It is an area to which I intend to give high priority when refreshing my Police and Crime Plan.

8. Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

Neil Hewison who was appointed to be Chief Executive of my office will take up post from 1 November 2013.

When I became Police and Crime Commissioner I said I would take some time to see how the role developed and the kind of support I would need to perform that role. I have now carried out a review of the workings of the Office and am proposing a restructuring of responsibilities within the Office to ensure I receive the support I need.

As part of that restructuring, I decided to appoint an Apprentice in Business Administration to increase the capacity in the administration office. I am delighted to say that a young person has just joined the office in that role.

The focus in the next three months will be to:-

- Present to the Police and Crime Panel, and more widely for consultation, proposals to refresh the Police and Crime Plan
- Develop the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget proposals
- Revise the Office Business Plan and develop the performance management framework
- Monitor the impact of Community Safety Ambassadors
- Prepare a Commissioning Strategy for community safety grants and for support for victims

9. Conclusion

This report sets out some of the key meetings I have attended and some of the principal issues we face or will be facing. I am happy of course to answer questions on any of the topics and would welcome comments from the Panel, particularly in relation to Second Stage Transfer.

The reports which have been discussed at my public meetings and the minutes of those meetings are available on the website of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. If the Panel would wish to receive more detailed reports or briefings on any of the issues I have briefly introduced in this report I would be happy to provide them.