

Subject:	Report of the Sussex Police Authority		
Date of Meeting:	8 December 2008		
Report of:	Director of Environment/Sussex Police Authority		
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at Hove Town Hall, on 23 October 2008.

Attendances:

Mr L H Barnard (Chairman), Mr P Bratton, Prof G Bull, Dr L E Bush (Vice-Chairman), Mr B Duncan, Mr F H Faiz, Mr J Mortimer, Mr A Price JP, Mrs C Shaves MBE JP, Mr R Tidy, Mr G Theobald OBE, Mr S Waight and Dr R Walker.

The Police Authority considered a wide range of policing issues at the meeting including the following matters. The full set of reports to the Police Authority can be accessed on the Authority's website.

1. POLICING GREEN PAPER

1.1 At a previous meeting the Authority was advised that the Government had published a Green Paper "From the Neighbourhood to the National - Policing our communities together" which proposed fundamental changes in the composition of police authorities and a strengthening of their responsibilities in a number of areas. It was also reported that the Government intended to introduce a Bill in Parliament to make any legislative changes which would be required. A joint response on behalf of the Police Authority and Sussex Police has now been agreed, and submitted to the Home Office. A copy of the final response is attached as an appendix to this report.

1.2 In summary the key points in the response are as follows:

- No convincing case has been made for changing the arrangements for appointing police authority members. In Sussex the three constituent authorities, West Sussex and East Sussex County Councils and Brighton & Hove City Council - appoint their most senior members to the Authority: their removal could significantly damage the present productive arrangements between policing and local government;

- The vital links with constituent councils ensure that policing remains connected with local government, but not owned by it. The introduction of directly elected members would obscure, not clarify, local accountability, and lead to the greater politicisation of policing;
- There is no evidence that the public would support an extra round of elections, which could take up to £750,000 from frontline policing in Sussex. Such elections are more likely to attract candidates seeking to pursue personal agendas which, if they were elected, would swiftly bring them into conflict with chief constables;
- The response welcomes the declared ambition of the Government to step away from centralised performance management and look forward to this being translated into action;
- The Home Office is urged not to proceed with plans for a national border police force, but to rely on the measures contained in the forthcoming Transport Security Bill to provide the desired benefits, without the extra costs; and
- The Home Office is also asked to make a clear statement that no attempt will be made to remove or modify the right of police authorities to raise the local contribution to the costs of policing through the council tax and that the formula used to allocate Government grants for policing be revised and made fairer for South East forces. Sussex could lose £8 million a year unless current arrangements which protect the Authority from the worst effects of the formula are maintained indefinitely.

1.3 It is very encouraging that in publishing the Green Paper the Government acknowledges the steps taken by police authorities and forces, including Sussex, to enhance the ability of police to deal with counter-terrorism and the most serious forms of crime, both independently and in collaboration with other forces and partners, thus removing any justification for re-opening the police force mergers debate. The Government's response to the consultation submissions is now awaited and, it is hoped, will be available for consideration at the Authority's December meeting.

2. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY (HMIC) AND AUDIT COMMISSION INSPECTION

2.1 The Authority has received the results of recent inspection activity by HMIC and the Audit Commission, with both bodies reporting good performance and progress in each of the Authority's strategic priorities. The Authority is pleased to receive HMIC's positive assessments of performance on keeping people safe and neighbourhood policing which recognise the investment made by the Authority in each area in recent years. Meanwhile the Audit Commission's evaluation of the Authority's use of resources confirms a strong record of financial standing with good levels of achievement in securing value for money.

- 2.2 The Authority is particularly pleased to note that the assessment reflects the strong performance of Sussex Police, supported by increased investment by the Authority, in respect of “protective services” involving tackling serious and organised crime, and counter-terrorism activity. of HMIC’s inspection activity has been focused on these areas of criminality, reflecting the concerns expressed in its “Closing the Gap” report about national capacity and capability in this area of policing. “Closing the Gap” led to national pressure on forces to merge, which was resisted by this Authority, which preferred to invest in developing capacity and capability independently. Current HMIC inspection activity is therefore an important, independent test of whether this strategic decision was the right one.
- 2.3 In summary, the inspection results provide an endorsement of the position taken by the Authority and the investment of £4m it provided, and the work undertaken by the Force to implement the agreed enhancements.
- 2.4. HMIC’s Major Crime inspection, published in July, graded Sussex as meeting the required standard. Last month the Inspectorate produced a thematic report on serious and organised crime which named some forces as having “significant developmental needs”. Sussex is not one of these, and HMIC has also been positive about progress on the issues identified in “Closing the Gap”. Indeed, Sussex was due to be inspected during the Autumn on further areas of protective services, but following a “risk/threat/demand assessment” by HMIC that visit has been cancelled. This again represents a positive assessment of what is being achieved by Sussex Police with the support of the Authority.
- 2.5 HMIC has also been testing the delivery of the national neighbourhood policing programme, which was required to be in place in all forces by April this year, and the ongoing work on making the police service focused on the needs of the people it serves. These areas were tested by the Inspectorate earlier in 2008, with reports for each force published last month. Sussex was assessed as meeting the required standard in “neighbourhood policing” and in “developing citizen focused policing” – both areas in which the Authority has invested, and has supported the significant amount of activity undertaken by Sussex Police. The Authority has also implemented a substantial consultation programme to seek the views of the community which is being fed into the preparation of the Local Policing Plan referred to at paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3.
- 2.6 The scores achieved by the Authority in respect of police use of resources is very high, and places Sussex in the top quadrant of performing authorities with regard to use of resources. The Audit Commission’s overall judgement in respect of the use of resources is the maximum grade of 4, which demonstrates that the Authority is well above minimum requirements and continuing to perform strongly. A copy of the full document is available on the Authority’s website.
- 2.7 The above findings represent an endorsement of the Authority’s approach to enhancing the strategic themes of keeping people safe and neighbourhood policing. This has included key strategic decisions on collaborative activity and

also targeted investment, followed up with ongoing scrutiny by the Authority. Set against a picture of investment by the Authority, the positive assessment by the Audit Commission provides further reassurance that public money is being used well to deliver policing to the people of Sussex.

3. LOCAL POLICING PLAN 2009-2012

- 3.1 Each year police forces and police authorities are required to produce Strategic plans which look ahead to the next three years. The resulting Local Policing Plan represents the contract between the Authority and Sussex Police. Sussex has successfully developed a Local Policing Plan Board to oversee the development of the Plan, ensuring the contract is drafted with senior involvement from both the Authority and Sussex Police. The Authority is represented on the Board by the Chairman of its Planning and Performance Steering Group; the members who sit on each Force Strategic Board – Neighbourhood Policing, Keeping People Safe and Best Use of Resources; and the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 3.2 Timescales for the production of the 2009-12 Plan have been tightened to enable a draft of the text to be brought to the Authority's December meeting alongside proposals on budget and targets. As in previous years, details of tactical delivery – the activity that achieves the strategic ambitions – will be included in divisional and departmental plans. The timetable draws in key pieces of work to shape the Plan. The consultation activities of the Authority and Sussex Police have an important influence in setting direction, and include the round of public and stakeholder consultation events taking place during the Autumn. Similarly, the production of the Force Strategic Assessment has been timed so it can feed into the Local Policing Plan.
- 3.3 The new plan will retain the three key strategic themes referred to in 3.1, and throughout will run the commitment to improving community confidence by delivering a quality service focused on its customers. This reflects the ambition of the Policing Green Paper to set public confidence as the overarching performance measure for the police service. The intention is to produce a strategic document that focuses on the vision for policing in Sussex during the next three years; is aligned with budget proposals; and sets out clearly what the public can expect from its police service. This is likely to make the main body of the Plan shorter and more accessible. The Local Policing Plan Board has already discussed the principles for the development of targets. It has been agreed these will combine the need to drive and retain focus on certain aspects of policing activity, with the emerging – and complex – area of measurement and understanding of levels of public confidence.

4. POLICING AND RESOURCE PLANNING: BUDGET STRATEGY TO 2012

- 4.1 The Authority has considered the Chief Constable's draft service priorities for the period to 2012, the proposed budget strategy for 2009-10 and the service and financial planning process for the following two years. The draft service priorities will provide the foundation for the Local Policing Plan

priorities and budget decisions to be considered by the Authority at its budget meeting on 12 February 2009.

- 4.2 The Authority continues to be badly affected by central government funding because it has traditionally been a low spending Authority and suffers disproportionately from the capping regime which the Government has stated that it expects to maintain. However, the Authority and the Chief Constable are committed to implementing the strategic themes of the Local Policing Plan: developing neighbourhood policing, keeping people safe and making best use of resources. Between now and 2010, Sussex Police, in common with other forces face significant revenue budget pressures. The Authority is firmly committed to maintaining and where possible improving local neighbourhood policing across Sussex, providing a service that is visible, accessible and responsive to local concerns. At the same time Sussex Police need to strengthen the services which allow neighbourhoods to flourish and help keep people safe, such as tackling serious and organised crime and counter-terrorism.
- 4.3 Members asked the officers to continue with the preparation of the 2009-10 budget on the basis that the Authority would wish to provide the level of policing recommended by the Chief Constable, consistent with the financial impact being contained within a council tax increase of between 4.5 and 4.9%.

LIONEL BARNARD
3 October 2008

Chairman

