Coventry City Council

Public Report

Cabinet	**11th January 2005**
Report to Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee	**12th January 2005**
Council	**18th January 2005**

Report of Head of Corporate Policy

Building Communities, Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century – Home Office White Paper on Police Reform

1   Purpose of the Report

1.1   This report seeks your agreement to a response to the Home Office White Paper on Police Reform – Building Communities, Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century, published on 9th November 2004.

2   Recommendations

2.1   Cabinet is recommended to:
- Consider and amend as necessary the draft response contained in Appendix 1 to this report and refer it for consideration by Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee;
- refer their proposed response to full Council on 18th January 2005.

2.2   Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to consider the report and the views of Cabinet.

2.3   Council is recommended to endorse the views of Cabinet.

3   Information/Background

3.1   A White Paper on Police Reform was published on 9th November 2004 and information was sent to all Members on 23rd November, inviting comment by 10th December 2004.

3.2   This follows the Home Office Consultation at the end of 2003 entitled Policing: Building Safer Communities Together.

3.3   The White Paper outlines how the government intends to further reform the police service. The paper details what they believe this reform would mean for the police, local people, local neighbourhoods and authorities.

3.4   The White Paper sets out its objectives as:

- The spread of neighbourhood policing for the 21st century to every community with improved police responsiveness and customer service;
- Further modernisation of the police workforce to ensure that the service is fully equipped and able to deliver these changes;
- Greater involvement of communities and citizens in determining how their communities are policed.

3.5 There are 5 Chapters, containing key proposals including:

- **Chapter 1: Building a better police service.** This chapter sets out the Government's vision for the White Paper and sets out 10 commitments to citizens including a commitment to ensure citizens know who their local police officer, community support officer and wardens are – and who is in charge locally and have confidence that the police, local authorities and other agencies are working on their behalf in keeping their communities safe.
- **Chapter 2: More effective policing – the case for further reform.** This chapter sets out progress to date on improving policing, why further reform is necessary and the shape that this reform should take.
- **Chapter 3: A new relationship between the police and the public – building trust and confidence.** This chapter sets out proposals to achieve accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, engendering a new culture of customer responsiveness and guaranteed standards of customer service with opportunities for local communities to have a say in local policing priorities.
- **Chapter 4: Building a new workforce.** This chapter sets out proposals to modernise the police workforce to reinforce neighbourhood policing and citizen engagement, as well as increasing use of police staff to get officers back on the front line and maximising the use of community support officers.
- **Chapter 5: Ensuring effectiveness.** This chapter sets out a clear national framework to support locally responsive policing.

3.6 The Paper seeks to 'enhance the current role of councillors and local authority community safety officers to give them an explicit remit to provide a focal point for the local community in terms of dealing with those agencies responsible for community safety'.

3.7 This response has been developed in consultation with the Community Safety Partnership.

4. Proposal & Other Options to be Considered

4.1 It is proposed to submit a Coventry Community Safety Partnership response (Appendix 1), of which the Local Authority input will form an integral part, subject to comments approved at Cabinet and Council.

5. Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Area Co-ordination	✠	
Best Value		✠
Children & Young People		✠
Comparable Benchmark Data		✠

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Corporate Parenting		✠
Coventry Community Plan	✠	
Crime and Disorder	✠	
Equal Opportunities		✠
Finance		✠
Human Resources		✠
Human Rights Act		✠
Health and Safety		✠
Impact on Partner Organisations	✠	
Information and Communications Technology		✠
Legal Implications		✠
Property Implications		✠
Risk Management		✠
Race Equality Scheme		✠
Sustainable Development		✠
Trade Union Consultation		✠
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		✠

5.1 Area Co-ordination

Area Co-ordination provides a focal point for co-ordinating multi-agency responses to local community safety issues. Neighbourhood policing teams would need to be intrinsically linked to the whole neighbourhood management process.

5.2 Coventry Community Plan

A key priority in the Coventry Community Plan is to reduce crime and the fear of crime. The proposals in the paper would achieve a more accessible and responsive policing service which will assist in tackling crime and as important, increasing public satisfaction and reassurance.

5.3 Crime & Disorder

Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to consider crime and disorder implications in all service areas. All of the proposals in the White Paper will have a positive impact on the prevention and detection of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

5.4 Impact on Partner Organisations

The proposals will obviously impact on the Police and the Police Authority and potentially a number of other organisations who work together in the City to reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

6. Timetable

6.1 The closing date for comments is 1st February 2005.

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection
Description of paper   **Location**

Building Communities, Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century –
Home Office White Paper on Police Reform

Response from the Coventry Community Safety Partnership

The Coventry Community Safety Partnership welcomes the proposals in the White Paper.

Chapter One: Building a better police service

The Partnership welcomes the introduction of an additional 25,000 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and Wardens across the country by 2008. However, there is a need to consider the long term funding for these posts as currently Local Authorities in particular are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain those wardens that are funded through the first and second rounds of external funding from the ODPM.

Dedicated neighbourhood policing teams have been very successful in those areas which have benefited, although there are examples where extractions have proved very frustrating both for local agencies but also for local communities. In order to maximise this approach, thought should be given to other roles that are performing similar guardianship functions, ie. street inspectors, park rangers, housing officers, etc. In Coventry this approach is being explored through the development of multi-agency tasking processes which will allow for better targeting of resources for all agencies.

In order to ensure that crime and community safety issues are considered mainstream activities for all service areas within Local Authorities and other agencies, it is vital to emphasise the requirement of Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998. There are still limited authorities/agencies that are statutorily required to consider Section 17 and there should be consideration given to extending this requirement. LSPs would be an effective vehicle through which to promote Section 17. All government departments should also be considering Section 17 requirements in their respective performance management frameworks/inspection regimes.

Multi-agency problem solving groups at a local level are critical to providing both short and long term responses to local problems. Neighbourhood management should provide the infrastructure to support and facilitate local neighbourhood community safety forums. Coventry are currently developing this approach in order to ensure that appropriate, sustainable solutions are being developed to address locally identified issues.

We strongly support the introduction of a new statutory Victims Code of Practice to improve the standard of service for victims of crime which will encourage and empower local people to provide evidence, thus providing a better outcome at court and increased confidence in the Criminal Justice System.

There is full support for the proposal of a non-emergency telephone number although the linkages and relationships to services in local areas will need to be robust to ensure that identified issues, particularly in the case of anti-social behaviour, are handled appropriately and effectively. It will be important to involve the LGA or National Community Safety Network in discussions around the development of a national non emergency number and to be clear about how this might link with local arrangements which may be in an early developmental stage.The information that is produced for households regarding local policing issues in the area should provide a range of information on the work of the Community Safety Partnership and not just the Police Service.

Chapter Two & Three: more effective policing – the case for further reform & a new relationship between the police and the public – building trust and confidence

Local Strategic Partnerships and the development of Local Area Agreements will ensure that communities are heard and represented both at a local and strategic level. Locally, the Coventry Empowerment Network acts as the main vehicle for community involvement and engagement on the 8 themes in the Coventry Community Plan, which includes community safety.

It is imperative that the consultation on policing is integrated with other consultation mechanisms in the local community area, so that there is well-organised collection of data and information and co-ordinated, transparent mechanisms for feeding actions back to the public.

Consultation shows that an area of concern for residents is the lack of feedback and information when an incident is reported, therefore this is a key consideration and an integral part of the reform regarding building relationships with communities. Evidence suggests that those involved with the police, particularly victims and witnesses, who receive feedback of some sort after the event, feel more confident and are more satisfied with the service.

Local authorities will also have developed or be developing community engagement strategies and any responsibility on police authorities regarding community engagement will need to be consistent with local arrangements.

Residents welcome a regular face and a regular presence and there needs to be a policy to ensure that police officers are not constantly moved around as it takes a long time to develop relationships with local communities and this can very quickly be diluted if there are regular personnel changes. The importance of having a dedicated, easily contactable officer for each local area cannot be overstated.

Chapter 4 – Building a New Workforce

The issues facing the police service are common to many other public services. We are very supportive of the initiatives set out in the paper in relation to development programmes. There is a need to ensure that officers of all rank have a good understanding of partnership working and this needs to be included in the development programme.

The role of Police Community Support Officers is going to be very important within neighbourhood teams and powers available to PCSOs should be carefully considered in line with community expectations and learning from pilot areas where powers have been exercised.

We accept and agree that the majority of their time should be spent on the street providing a visible and reassuring presence, although enforcement powers should be available should the situation arise and this would potentially be a weapon in the armoury, not for perpetual use, which could possibly take them off the streets.

If enforcement powers are not given to PCSOs, the public will see them as powerless and they would not be afforded respect which would be detrimental to them performing their duties.

Locally in Coventry wardens do not have any enforcement powers and if neighbourhood teams are to consist of these different roles, it might be sensible to take a layered approach to enforcement options to ensure that the full range of powers are available .
We welcome the proposal to prohibit police officers from becoming a member of any organisation whose constitution, aims or objectives are incompatible with the duty imposed by Sect 71 of the

Race Relations Act 1976.

Emphasis on the role of Elected Members generally and the attendance of the lead Member for community safety on the Police Authority will be key both in relation to representing communities and also in terms of accountability.

It is important that any model of accountability is closely connected to the local authority which is the recognised multi-service, democratically elected body which can look at all aspects of community life.

Chapter 5 – Ensuring Effectiveness

Locally in Coventry, the Community Safety Partnership are considering adopting the National Intelligence Model approach to performance management and service improvement. A partnership strategic assessment has recently been undertaken, led by the Police and this has resulted in a number of recommendations that are the responsibility of a whole range of partners. This will be used as part of the drive to mainstream Section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998.

The development of an Improvement Agency will rationalise current arrangements. It will be important to work together with other public sector inspection regimes/improvement agencies to ensure that cross-cutting issues and partnership arrangements are looked at within a consistent and complementary framework.

The proposal to align the financial planning cycle for Basic Command Units with the strategic planning currently undertaken by CDRPs in the production of Community Safety Strategies is welcomed and would be helpful should an element of the funding available to BCU commanders be included in the "pooled" Safer Stronger Communities Fund.

All of the proposals in the paper are seen as a positive way forward and have been received positively by the Community Safety Partnership.

Recognition of the amount of resources that will be required to implement such changes cannot be overstated and therefore messages that are sent out to local people will need to be realistic in order to manage public expectation.