



Coventry City Council

8.8

Public report

Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

5th March, 2008

Report of
Cllr Tony O'Neill

Title
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – West Midlands Police Authority

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This reports sets out details of the work of West Midlands Police Authority over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the content of this report and that this appointment is made through the West Midlands Joint Committee.

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 The Police Authority has a number of functions and the main ones include:

- Maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of West Midlands Police
- Overseeing police accountability to the community, and checking that the force is achieving its targets and offering value for money
- Agreeing the budget for policing in the area
- We also work with Community Safety Partnerships to help reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime. The Authority has a lead member that sits on all the 7 partnerships across the West Midlands.

The Authority is a strategic body and the Chief Constable is responsible for operational matters. Please see attached report at **Annex 1** for a more detailed outline of the work of the Authority.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 The City Council has a seat on the strategic body to which the Chief Constable is accountable for policing matters and therefore can raise issues that arise locally as well as influencing the Strategic Policing Plan for the region, and the performance targets that are set alongside the plan. The City Council, as a precepting authority also has important representation during the discussions around precept setting during budgetary discussions.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

5.1 Attendance currently stands at 70%, and remuneration for the appointment is £13,415.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

Author:	Telephone
Councillor Tony O'Neill	024 7683 1003
(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)	

Other contributors:

Alethea Fuller, Policy Manager, West Midlands Police Authority

Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper	Location
Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies	CH 59

REPORT FOR THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 2008

COUNCILLOR TONY O'NEILL

Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to provide to members of Coventry City Council Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee with an update on the work of West Midlands Police Authority. The report will cover national, regional and local issues.

The role of the Authority

- 2 The Police Authority has a number of functions and the main ones include:
 - Maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of West Midlands Police
 - Overseeing police accountability to the community, and checking that the force is achieving its targets and offering value for money
 - Agreeing the budget for policing in the area
 - We also work with Community Safety Partnerships to help reduce crime and disorder and the fear of crime. The Authority has a lead member that sits on all the 7 partnerships across the West Midlands.

The Authority is a strategic body and the Chief Constable has responsibility for operational matters.

Feeling the difference and satisfaction surveys

- 3 Councillors will be aware that the force conducts a major survey of residents across the West Midlands. Four times a year, 250 people in each of the 21 OCUs that make up the West Midlands are surveyed. This totals 21,000 each year and is one of the largest surveys of its type anywhere in the country. The survey is currently in its fourth year and has shown year on year improvements in its results. Questions are asked around how safe people feel, their views on the harmony within their communities together with seeking views on their local police. The results for Coventry show that over 90% of people give positive results on feelings of safety and harmony. This major survey is supplemented by other survey work on satisfaction. Over 80% of residents have indicated that they are satisfied with the action taken by the police and the overall service given and the force has a target of 70% of people being satisfied with the feedback they are given.

Neighbourhood policing

- 4 Neighbourhood policing teams have now been rolled out across the West Midlands. Information on neighbourhood policing was sent by the Authority to every home in the West Midlands in the form of a local policing summary in May of this year. Hopefully you should all have received a copy of the leaflet which was relevant to your Ward. Local OCUs also provide further details to their local communities on a regular basis.

Performance

- 5 Coventry is experiencing good reductions in total recorded crime for the 2007/08 performance year. At the end of January the year to date reduction stood at nearly 15% against the same period the previous year with January 2008 recording a 26.1% reduction over January 2007. The result of this is that there have been over 4,500 fewer crimes this year. The three highest volume crimes for Coventry are section 20/47 assaults, theft from motor vehicles and damage to motor vehicles all of which are showing reduced levels of offending with theft from motor vehicles down over a third on levels last year. These crime reductions have put Coventry in a good position to achieve its Public Service Agreement target for crime reduction of 20% in the city since 2003/04. All three Operational Command Units within Coventry have achieved and are consolidating good reductions across a whole range of offences. In addition to good performance on crime levels Coventry is achieving target for detection rate with current performance at 27.0%.

Recorded Crime	Apr-Jan 2006/07	Apr-Jan 2007/08	Difference	
Total Recorded Crime	30,497	25,988	-4,509	-14.8%
Serious Harm Offences	4,675	4,376	-299	-6.4%
Business Crime	5,756	4,676	-1,080	-18.8%
Racially Aggravated Crime	317	359	+42	+13.2%
Criminal Damage	6,667	5,516	-1,151	-17.3%
Burglary Dwelling	1,991	1,820	-171	-8.6%
Robbery	679	546	-133	-19.6%
Vehicle Crime	4,335	2,936	-1,399	-32.3%
Violent Crime	7,362	6,976	-386	-5.2%
Sanction Detections	26.6%	27.0%		

West Midlands Police, the Police Authority and the City Council have been addressing issues of hate crime (which includes racially aggravated crime). The Police Authority have part funded a hate crime reporting centre in Coventry with a view to encouraging victims to report such crimes. An increase in these numbers could indicate victims' confidence in reporting such crimes to the police. An increase in the numbers shown in the table above can therefore be interpreted in different ways.

Future plans

- 6 The Authority has undertaken a review of its approach to consultation with communities and we are now employing a range of methods across the West Midlands area. We have welcomed the opportunity to work with colleagues in a number of local authority areas to undertake joint consultation activities. In Coventry, while some of the more successful consultative public meetings have been retained, the Authority has been working with the Community Safety Partnership to look at how we can work more effectively together. In addition to this revised geographical approach the Authority has also targeted other sectors, such as youth, disabled and the business community. This engagement activity has taken place during the Autumn of 2007. We held a community consultation event in Coventry in October 2007, alongside 2 youth focus groups and the feedback from these events has been used to inform the strategic planning process.
- 7 On 21 September the Authority and Force met with the seven Heads of Community Safety/Community Safety Managers, and the Government Office of the West Midlands. We recognise the complex picture we all face with the revised Local Area Agreement structure being introduced and the need to ensure that, where possible, we co-ordinate our planning activities to avoid conflicting targets and priorities as we all work to agreeing our plans. Further meetings involving the Authority, Force, Heads of Community Safety,

GOWM and the Local Criminal Justice Board have been held and will continue going forward as we work in partnership with other agencies.

Regional initiatives

- 8 The Authority continues to meet regularly with police authority colleagues from the West Midlands Region.
- 9 The Committee will be aware of the heightened security situation that the country faces. The Government's counter-terrorism strategy 'CONTEST' has significant implications for forces and authorities. Additional resource is being devoted to addressing the four strands of the strategy; prevent, pursue, protect and prepare. Forces and authorities are keen to ensure that there is effective working to ensure that the West Midlands region is contributing to this strategy. Both the Authority and the Force also recognise, particularly in respect of the 'prevent' agenda, the importance of joint working with its local authority partners. Both look forward to developing further partnership working in this area.
- 10 West Midlands Police is one of four forces, (Metropolitan, West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester police forces), who will be the site of counter-terrorism units. The Unit has not been located in the West Midlands because of a link to a threat here but has been created as part of a national resource to tackle terrorism. As a result of the additional work for the force an additional Assistant Chief Constable post has been created.

National initiatives

- 11 Councillors will remember that in July 2006 the then Home Secretary, John Reid MP, decided not to pursue a programme of force amalgamations. Following this announcement Tony McNulty MP, Policing Minister, stated that there remained a continuing need to ensure public protection through national, cross-force and local action to address the gap in 'protective services'. Protective services cover strategic roads policing, civil contingencies, serious and organised crime, major crime, counter-terrorism and extremism, critical incidents, public order
- 12 The government's preferred strategy is to encourage collaboration between forces to meet the service delivery gap. The West Midlands force, as a large and well performing force has had a successful history of collaboration with adjoining forces and this work continues.
- 13 On 27 March 2007, the Prime Minister and Home Secretary published the results of a Cabinet wide review of the Government's long-term strategy on security, crime, immigration and community cohesion. Following this the Home Secretary announced a review of policing focusing on the following four areas:
 - Reducing bureaucracy
 - Embedding neighbourhood policing
 - a review of governance to ensure that the public are driving local policing priorities
 - efficient and effective use of resources to deliver on all the challenges facing the police service
- 14 The Review is being led by Sir Ronnie Flanagan, Chief Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. He has appointed a number of leads for each of the four work streams. The Committee may wish to note that the stream dealing with governance and local accountability is led by Sir Robin Wales, the elected Mayor of Newham and John Graham, Director of the Police Institute. The Review invited initial submissions by 31 July 2007. The Authority made a submission and copies can be provided to any councillors should

they wish to have sight of the document. It is also available on the Authority's website.

- 15 Sir Ronnie's Interim Report was presented on 12 September 2007. The full text of the report is available at the Home Office's website. The report focuses on the first two of the bullet points above and makes a number of recommendations. No recommendations are made in respect of local accountability. Work continues on this and the three other streams with the expectation of a final report early in the New Year. The publication of the report was followed on 13 September 2007 by the Home Secretary announcing that she intends to publish a Green Paper in the New Year outlining a strategic vision for the delivering genuine improvements in police performance.
- 16 The final report has now been published and we are in the process of looking at what this means for both the Authority and the force and discussions will be taking place regarding the recommendations and possible pilot initiatives. The full and final report is also available on the Authority's website.
- 17 Councillors may also be aware that the Police and Justice Act 1996 contains provisions which would provide for overview and scrutiny of the work of crime and disorder reduction partnerships. These are similar to but do not mirror the overview and scrutiny provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill. Both give new powers to both Ward Councillors individually and collectively through Overview and Scrutiny Committees. There are also requirements placed upon other organisations. The Home Office has indicated that it intends to 'pause' its work on the introduction of the Act's provisions.

Local Activity

- 18 In addition to the regional activity, Cllr O'Neill also has very good working relationships locally with regular Operational Command Unit (OCU) visits to each of the 3 OCUs twice annually. In addition, consultative forums are held in order to consult with the community, again on each OCU twice a year. This ensures that we have good links into the community on an on-going basis and can use the information to influence the strategic planning processes that the Authority has. The Police Authority as a responsible authority is also represented on the Community Safety Partnership.