

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at County Hall, Lewes, on 16 December 2004. Attendances:

Mr M Dunn (Chairman),
Mr L H Barnard, Mrs M G Bishop, Mr K C Bodfish OBE, Dr L E Bush, Miss J A Corcho, Miss A Graves JP, Dr S Iles-Jonas JP, Mr J Mortimer, Mr D O Rogers OBE, Mr I Scotland JP, Mrs A Swain, Mr R Thomas, Mrs M C Turner and Dr J M M Walsh RD.

1 White Paper on Policing

1.1 The Government published its White Paper, "Building Communities, Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century", on 9 November. The White Paper can be accessed on the Police Authority's website.

1.2 The White Paper is a ringing endorsement of the approach to community policing successfully adopted in Sussex over the last three years. The White Paper commends all the initiatives which the Police Authority and Sussex Police have taken, with local partners, to re-introduce neighbourhood policing, make policing visible, recruit Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), align policing and local authority boundaries, create local police "chiefs", improve call-handling and response times, open more police stations and for longer hours, reintroduce traditional blue lights, local branding of officers and vehicles, local contact information, joint working with local authorities, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Local Action Teams and partners in the criminal justice system, effective performance management, consultation and community engagement. Sussex has led nationally on many of these areas, and the Government would now like to see the success which we have had extended across the country.

1.3 In addition to committing itself to revitalised community policing for today's world, the Government also explores in the White Paper issues relating to a dynamic, modern workforce and greater involvement of communities and citizens. The Police Authority has commented on some of the ideas in these sections of the White Paper. However, in general the overall thrust of the White Paper is to be warmly welcomed, representing as it does an endorsement of the ability of well-led Police Authorities and Forces to adapt to the conditions of the 21st Century. Some, but only some, of the recommendations in the White Paper would require legislation, but not during the current Parliamentary Session.

1.4 At the same time as the publication of the White Paper, the Government announced a formal review of the partnership provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended. This review will be carried out jointly by the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities and will report its conclusions by the end of January 2005, following which the Government intends to move swiftly to put agreed recommendations into effect.

2 Draft Local Policing Plan (LPP) 2005/08

2.1 Although the overall government objectives contained in the draft National Policing Plan remain largely unchanged there is greater emphasis on citizen focus. The Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) continues as the means of measuring and accounting for performance. The new LPP will be structured using this model and cross referenced with the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) Baseline Assessment. It incorporates existing statutory performance targets and the Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. The PSA targets require a 15% reduction in overall crime as measured by the British Crime Survey by 2008 and an additional 1.25 million offences brought to justice. The key issues that need to be taken forward for the Force include :-

- the development of a programme focusing upon improved community cohesion, community participation and engagement with problem solving activity. The full impact of this work must be positively felt by those who are most vulnerable or who live within minority ethnic communities;
- modernising the working practices and profile of our staff to secure a representative, flexible workforce with the skills necessary to deliver a range of services, extending the use of non-sworn staff to provide further support to frontline officers in key operational areas, including reassurance patrols, crime investigation and operational support;
- developing mechanisms to both inform and engage with the public and partners to develop an understanding of key concerns and expectations surrounding service delivery, matching our services to customer need within a framework of minimum standards;
- collaboration with other forces and partners at all levels, to tackle level 2 criminality in particular, will continue to present challenges. Recent high profile inquiries have raised concerns around the need to strengthen inter-force and agency relationships and harness technological advances to impact upon serious and organised criminals. Sussex is a leading contributor in a number of areas that will have a positive influence in this area. Counter-terrorism remains a key area where public confidence must be retained through demonstration of the Force's preparedness to deal with events likely to have the most significant effect upon the feelings of security amongst communities.

2.2 The Police Authority hosted a conference on 3 December 2004 to determine how best to align the planning processes with the targets of strategic partners, such as CDRPs. This year presents a unique opportunity to align planning processes as Police Authority and CDRP three year strategic plan cycles coincide. The final version of the Plan will be submitted to the Police Authority's meeting on 12 February 2004 for approval.

3 2005/06 Provisional Finance Settlement and Budget Strategy

3.1 The Government announced the provisional finance settlement on 2 December and the key national headlines are set out below:

- the total spending for police in 2005/06 to 2007/08 has increased by 5.1%, more than was implied by the 2004 Spending Review;
- the 2005/06 increase includes a special 0.25% uplift that would not otherwise have been provided. The uplift will not be taken into account in calculating grant increases in 2006/07;
- the average formula grant increase for police authorities is 4.85%, with the increases ranging from 3.75% to 6.9%;
- Home Office Specific Grant Funding (excluding the core Police Grant) will increase by about 8%. However, some grants have been frozen;
- the assumed national increase in the police share of council tax yield is 3.2%, with an expectation that council tax increases will be on average below 5%;
- Central Home Office spending on Policing is set to rise by over 25%;
- the new 3% annual efficiency target has been confirmed, half of which must be

cashable.

3.2 In overall terms the settlement is better than expected, but still falls well short of what is needed to meet inflation, the rising costs of pensions and unavoidable commitments. The key points for Sussex are as follows:

- the core funding increase for Sussex Police is 3.75%, higher than expected but at the funding floor;
- there has been a further erosion of the underlying position on the police funding formula, with the Area Cost Adjustment reducing from 3.1% to 2.8%;
- the cash increase in aggregate external funding and assumed national council tax is some £6.5m, sufficient to cover basic pay and price inflation, but falling well short of the sum needed to meet a range of unavoidable cost pressures and other commitments; and
- specific grants notified to date show an overall increase of 7%, but this conceals the freezing of certain grants and reductions in others.

3.3 The figures need to be treated with a degree of caution at this stage and further announcements are expected on specific grants and capital funding. The Government is inviting responses on the provisional settlement by 11 January 2005 and the Authority has raised a number of concerns including the overall sufficiency of the Provisional Finance Settlement in meeting the requirements of national and local policing priorities; the failure to incorporate the detail of the 2001 census data in the grant funding formula, which has an adverse effect on Sussex; and the disproportionate effect on council tax when there are shortfalls in government grant funding.

3.4 In developing the proposed budget framework, the Chief Constable has considered the requirements of the new National Policing Plan 2005-08, and the local priorities and targets to be finalised in the Local Policing Plan for 2005/06. A key requirement is to continue the improvements agreed by the Police Authority in delivering an effective neighbourhood based police service with improved public contact; combating burglary, vehicle, serious and organised crime; and increasing the number of offences brought to justice.

3.5 During the current year the Police Authority's investment has enabled Sussex Police to deliver a more visible, accessible and localised police service than has been possible for many years, including

- police officer numbers at the highest level since the formation of Sussex Police – 3,197 Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) at the end of October 2004;
- increasing numbers of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) with 202 FTEs at the end of October 2004, with funding for the recruitment of an additional 25 PCSOs announced last month;
- improvements in call handling following the investment agreed by the Police Authority last year; more than 90% of emergency calls to Sussex Police are being answered within ten seconds, compared with 77.4% a year earlier. Targets for responding to grade one calls are also being met; and
- improving productivity in terms of arrests, detections and offences brought to justice; compared to the previous year Sussex Police has achieved increases of 13% in numbers of arrests, 15% in numbers of detections and 19% in the number of offences brought to justice.

3.6 However, challenges remain. Local priorities, informed by local consultation, reflect continued investment in neighbourhood policing, working with local authority partners to improve community safety, combating organized crime, drugs and alcohol-related offences. The Police Authority also identified in 2003 a target to increase police strength to 3,500 FTEs by 31 March 2006. To help meet this target the Chief Constable is examining options to provide an extra constable to each of the 42 Neighbourhood Policing Teams in Sussex. The options are being developed and proposals will be submitted to the Police Authority in February.

3.7 The Police Authority discussed the implications of the provisional finance settlement and, in the light of the further work on the budget, noted the various budget options.

3.8 The Police Authority's consultation over budgets forms part of its wider consultation strategy. The most recent round of Police Authority public meetings included information on financial prospects as well as police performance. Feedback from the public consultation meetings noted the positive feedback on PCSOs and the Police Authority's investment in call handling improvements, although there were concerns expressed with regard to response times to non-emergency calls.

3.9 The Clerk, with the Chief Constable and Treasurer, will undertake further consultation on the 2005/06 budget, including on-line consultation on the budget options through the Authority's web site until late January 2005. This will inform the Police Authority's consideration of budget proposals at its meeting in February 2005. The Police Authority's press releases and Force Key Opinion Formers Database will also be used to draw attention to the opportunities for consultation on the budget.

4 Member Involvement in Performance Management

4.1 Effective performance management is central to the role of police authorities in holding their forces to account. The Police Authority is already well placed with the establishment of the Planning and Performance Steering Group (PPSG) and the alignment of Lead Member responsibility associated with geographical areas and departments to monitor performance. Lead Members will actively monitor the implementation of recommendations from Best Value reviews and make quarterly updates on progress to the PPSG. In addition to Best Value reviews the Chief Constable instigates management reviews which focus on areas of service provision which the Chief Constable believes would benefit from analysis to improve performance or service provision. These reviews are more succinct than a Best Value review and less formal in their implementation. Lead Members will be invited to give their advice on the area being reviewed.

4.2 The Force Performance Meetings (FPM) drive improvement in district performance and enable good practice to be shared across the Force. This regime has recently been extended to departments. Members attend the FPM on a regular basis. This personal engagement enables members directly to assess Force progress as well as expanding individual and collective knowledge and expertise.

4.3 The Police Authority and Sussex Police jointly commissioned an independent scrutiny by members of all relevant Sussex Police systems, to test compliance with the recommendations of the Bichard Inquiry. This innovative and open approach is one that may well be used in the future for identified priorities that warrant independent analysis. These will be set up on a case-by-case basis with the findings reported to the PPSG. Members are also currently fully involved in the routine inspections by HMIC and the Audit Commission and will be consulted during the planning and preparation for these visits. Lead Members will also report on a programmed basis on the work which they have been doing to monitor performance within Sussex Police.

4.4 It is hoped that these measures will increase awareness of the legitimate role of the Police Authority in monitoring performance and also strengthen this process by introducing an element of independent scrutiny.

5 Meeting with the Leaders and Chief Executives of Sussex Local Authorities

5.1 The Leaders and Chief Executives of Sussex Local Authorities, including representatives from Town and Parish Councils, attended a meeting on 26 November 2004 hosted by the Police Authority and Sussex Police. The meeting discussed a wide range of policing issues including the White Paper on Policing, the Budget 2005/06, the Local Policing Plan, Public Contact and unauthorised camping.

6 Appointment of Independent Member

6.1 Mr Faizul Hassan Faiz has been appointed, for a term of four years, as an independent member of the Police Authority and has filled the vacancy left by Miss Judith Corcho who has completed eight years as an independent member of the Police Authority. The Police Authority paid warm tribute to Miss Corcho who had made a significant contribution to policing policy in Sussex.

MARK DUNN
Chairman

16 December 2004