

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at County Hall, Lewes, on 13 December 2007.

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,
Dr S Iles-Jonas JP, Mr J Mortimer, Mr A Price JP, Mr D Rogers OBE,
Mrs C Shaves MBE JP, Mr R Tidy, Mr G Theobald OBE, Mr S Waight
and Dr R Walker.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETINGS – AUTUMN 2007

1.1 The Autumn series of public consultation meetings has been completed. The objective of the Autumn consultation is to seek people's views on policing and take these into account when agreeing the Local Policing Plan and setting the budget for Sussex Police.

1.2 The Autumn's programme of 15 public consultation meetings were attended by representatives from local bodies including Neighbourhood Watch, district, town, and parish councils together with members of the public. A major concern, raised as a prominent issue at many of the meetings, was anti-social driving and speeding. These concerns ranged from careless driver behaviour to deliberate activity and included dangerous aggressive driving, poor road skills, lorries using weight and width restricted roads and people using a mobile phone when driving. Sussex Police has established Operation Crackdown to target persistent bad drivers before they cause an accident and is working with other agencies to reduce the amount of time vehicles remain abandoned.

1.3 The public also sought assurances about the impact of measures being put in place to identify savings in the 2008-09 budget without reducing the level of service to the community. Public commitments were given not to close any police stations that are currently open, nor to reduce their opening hours. Neither would police officer or Police Community Support Officer numbers be reduced as a result of the savings and this was well received by the public. The public also expressed concerns about young people and alcohol, smokers gathering outside pubs and clubs, street drinking and the possible use of Designated Public Place Orders. It should be noted that across Sussex there was recognition of the strong performance of Sussex Police in tackling crime. A summary of the main issues and attendance has been placed on the Police Authority website.

1.4 The Police Authority is represented on the Sussex Police Local Policing Plan Development Board and will be inputting the views of the public to ensure that the issues of tackling anti-social driving and speeding and anti-social behaviour generally are referred to in the Local Policing Plan 2008-11, together with related policies to reduce their incidence.

1.5 It was clear from the views expressed at the public consultation meetings that Neighbourhood Policing is essential to delivering citizen focused policing, and is based on engagement with local communities to enable Sussex Police to respond to local policing needs. A significant partner in delivering neighbourhood policing is Neighbourhood Watch. The Police Authority discussed the concerns which had been expressed at the recent round of public consultation meetings, particularly by Neighbourhood Watch in West Sussex regarding the proposals being put forward to reorganise the delivery of crime prevention work to provide a uniform service across Sussex. As part of the Challenge Programme to examine the use of resources to meet the target of savings required Sussex Police have reviewed the delivery of crime prevention functions.

1.6 Major concerns regarding the proposed changes to the delivery of crime prevention have been voiced in West Sussex where a traditional approach to providing support to Neighbourhood Watch via Crime Prevention Co-ordinators has, to date, been maintained. The introduction of neighbourhood policing teams and Police Community Support Officers has meant that the mechanisms for working with Neighbourhood Watch have changed in recent years. East Sussex Division has already successfully introduced the new arrangements for the delivery of crime prevention work.

1.7 Sussex Police with the support of the Police Authority has agreed to the temporary retention of two Crime Prevention Co-ordinators to cover West Downs Division and North Downs Division for a 12 month period. The object of providing this temporary resource would be to enable the new system regarding crime prevention to be embedded successfully across West Sussex. It is hoped that this will provide reassurance to Neighbourhood Watch Partners in West Sussex that the new arrangements will continue to meet their requirements in respect of crime prevention matters. The Police Authority will be monitoring closely the implementation of the new arrangements for supporting crime prevention and Neighbourhood Watch to ensure that the arrangements provide a good service to the community and Neighbourhood Watch in particular.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

2.1 Since the introduction of neighbourhood specialist teams in 2006 Sussex Police has made significant progress in developing new structures to support the delivery of local policing services. Communities can now enjoy greater access to their local officers through the many opportunities that exist to engage with their local teams, for example, through the neighbourhood policing team internet sites. Public satisfaction with the action Sussex Police have taken is showing a positive improvement, highlighting that the Force are now better informed about what is important to communities. The improved focus on local issues has been delivered alongside the maintenance of excellent performance in other areas, for example record numbers of crimes being detected.

2.2 The 53 neighbourhood policing teams across Sussex provide a constant and visible presence within neighbourhoods, with many more people now knowing their local officers by name or sight. These relationships are providing a solid foundation to move from a model of neighbourhood policing to one of shared ownership and accountability. The Police Authority welcome the fact that Sussex Police has achieved a rating of Good from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary for its delivery of neighbourhood policing, a tremendous achievement in the relatively short period of time. This result recognises the dedication and commitment of the neighbourhood specialist teams to work successfully with communities to drive down crime and anti-social behaviour in Sussex.

2.3 A key element in strengthening policing at neighbourhood level has been the introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who provide a significant additional policing resource to support warranted police officers. The Authority has wholeheartedly embraced the introduction of PCSOs and has supported successive Chief Constables in recruiting PCSOs in Sussex which now total 354. The recruitment of PCSOs was seen as enabling the Force to move closer to the local, visible and accessible policing presence that communities in Sussex wish to see. The feedback from the Police Authority's public consultation meetings demonstrates that the public have welcomed the presence of PCSOs in their neighbourhood as the visible presence of Sussex Police. A recent evaluation of PCSOs has shown that the officers involved in the focus groups feel valued employees of Sussex Police, and felt that their role as an essential part of the neighbourhood policing style in Sussex enabled them to make a real difference to the communities that they served.

2.4 The Home Secretary has announced a range of actions to reinforce the role of PCSOs and has introduced a number of changes including powers relating to:

- the confiscation of alcohol in public places;
- the issuing of fixed penalty notices for anti-social behaviour, such as littering; and
- the seizure of drugs.

SPECIAL CONSTABLES AND POLICE CADETS

3.1 The use of volunteers to supplement police resources is a vital element of the best use of resources. The aim in 2008 is to work more closely with volunteers to increase Force capacity and deliver sustainable improvements to the quality of life experienced in neighbourhoods. Special Constables, volunteers and those working under the Chief Constable's accreditation scheme make a significant contribution to policing, acting as additional eyes and ears to support the police. Sussex Police is seeking to increase the number of Special Constables, volunteers and accredited partners to widen the protective presence in our communities.

3.2 The Special Constabulary is made up of members of the public who volunteer to spend some of their time helping to police their local community. Special Constables work alongside their regular colleagues and have the same powers in law, within their area of jurisdiction. There are currently 181 Special Constables in Sussex and those who have been Operational for the majority of 2007 (153), completed 33,984 hours of duty time between January 1 and September 1 2007. This provides an invaluable extra resource for policing in Sussex.

3.3 Sussex Police is seeking to bring the number of trained Special Constables up to 300 by March 2009. This will be achieved by normal recruiting procedures and through a new initiative Employee Supportive Policing (ESP). Sussex is planning to commence training the first group of ESP Specials in January 2008. Within ESP local companies have given their agreement for their staff to take time off to become a Special Constable. A number of major companies have already show interest in participating in the scheme.

3.4 Police Cadets are a force of young volunteers who meet for a few hours each week to learn new skills, get fit and develop their personal qualities, all while helping to prevent crime and co-ordinate minor public events in their area. Activities undertaken by Sussex Cadets include leaflet drops for crime prevention, event marshalling and test purchasing for licensing operations. Sussex Police have five units across Sussex based at Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton, Shoreham and Chichester. Each Unit comprises of up to 30 Cadets. Recently a number of Cadets have become Specials, PCSOs and Police Constables. A new training curriculum is currently under development. This is an area of the work of Sussex Police which is regarded as most important by the Authority and members and officers will continue to support their activities in any way they can.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING: BUDGET STRATEGY TO 2011

4.1 The Police Authority has considered the Chief Constable's draft service priorities for the period to 2011, the proposed budget strategy for 2008-09 and the service and financial planning process for the following two years. The draft service priorities will provide the foundation for the Policing Plan priorities and budget decisions to be considered by the Authority at its budget meeting on 14 February 2008.

4.2 The Police Authority continues to be badly affected by the settlement 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, enhancing protective services and making best use of resources.

4.3 Between now and 2010, Sussex Police, in common with other forces face significant revenue budget pressures. The Police Authority and Sussex Police are firmly committed to maintaining and even 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.

4.4 The Police Authority faces a shortfall of approximately £10m between now and 2010. In response to this the Challenge Programme was established to review and make the very best of available resources to develop neighbourhood policing, and invest in protecting people. The work has also identified savings of £6 million in the 2008-09 budget. The second stage will deliver up to £4m in the 2009-10 budget.

4.5 The Authority continues to progress the enhancement of protective services, particularly in tackling serious and organised crime, and sharing and managing information assets across forces. The Authority and Sussex Police are working with other forces in the South East region to collaborate to tackle serious and organised crime and counter terrorism. In support of the programme for enhancing protective services the Authority provided in its 2007-08 budget for additional investment in protective services of almost £2m. At its budget setting meeting in February the Police Authority will be considering a number of budget options aimed at maintaining and further enhancing the improvements which have been achieved in recent years.

ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2006-07

5. Following the meeting of the Committee the Police Authority has received the Annual Audit Letter for 2006/07 which reflects the strong position previously reported to the Authority following the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report for 2006/07. A copy of the Annual Audit Letter is on the Police Authority and Sussex Police websites.

LIONEL BARNARD
Chairman

December 2007