

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at Pelham House, Lewes, on Thursday, 5 June 2003.
Attendances:

Mr M Dunn (appointed Chairman), Mr L H Barnard, Mrs M G Bishop, Mr K C Bodfish OBE, Dr L E Bush, Miss J A Corcho, Miss M Dean, Mr R J Emerson, Mrs M D Johnson DL, Mr P Jones (appointed Vice-Chairman), Mr D O Rogers, Mr I Scotland, Mrs A Swain, Mr R Thomas, Mrs M C Turner and Dr J M M Walsh RD.

1 Membership of the Authority

1.1 The Police Authority noted that the Joint Committee comprising members of Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council, had appointed the following local authority members to serve on the Police Authority for the period from 1 June 2003 to 31 May 2005:-

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| Brighton & Hove City Council (1 member) | - Councillor K C Bodfish OBE |
| East Sussex County Council (3 members) | - Councillors P Jones, D O Rogers and R Thomas |
| West Sussex County Council (5 members) | - Councillors L H Barnard, M Dunn, Mrs M D Johnson DL, J Mortimer and Dr J M M Walsh RD |

2 Appointment of Clerk

2.1 Mr John Godfrey has been appointed as the Police Authority's first full time Clerk to succeed Mr Helmut Cartwright who is retiring at the end of July. Mr Godfrey is currently Head of West Sussex County Council's Secretariat. The Police Authority was pleased to have made the appointment from a strong shortlist. Mr Godfrey will take up his post at the end of August.

3 Performance Information : Annual Statistics 2002/03

3.1 The Authority considered Sussex Police performance against local Performance Plan priorities for 2002/03. The formal release of national figures, including Sussex, through the Home Office statistical bulletin 2002/03 was expected in July.

3.2 Total crime in Sussex for the year 2002/03 fell by 3.1% against the target in the Performance Plan of a 2% reduction. At 130,887 crimes, this amounted to 4,223 fewer crimes and victims of crime and followed a reduction in total crime in 2001/02 of 1.3%.

3.3 All the Policing Divisions had shown a very consistent performance with all Divisions (except Gatwick) achieving the 2% reduction target. In particular, Highdown (Littlehampton and Worthing areas) (5.8% less crime) and Western (Bognor Regis, Chichester and Midhurst areas) (4.9% less crime) more than met the target.

3.4 Nationally, the picture had been changed dramatically by implementation of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), with many forces showing big increases in crime. In terms of crime per 1,000 population this had the effect of moving Sussex from the

third quartile to being close to the top quartile (the highest performance category). The Police Authority noted that Sussex was one of only five or six forces in the country expected to show a reduction in crime. This was a good achievement, particularly in view of the previous year's reduction. However, the Authority was concerned that the target of increasing the number of detections by 5% to 35,890 had not been achieved with 30,998 crimes being detected. The need to increase capacity to improve detections had been recognised by the Authority and is a key part of the budget for 2003/04. This, and a number of other key issues and positive outcomes were taken into account by the Authority in assessing Force performance overall (see paragraphs 3.19 to 3.22 below).

3.5 Domestic burglary in Sussex had increased by 7.8% against the 2% reduction target in the Performance Plan. Whilst the Authority was concerned about the increase, it had to be set against the significant decreases in previous years – 8,209 burglaries in 2002/03 compared to the 1998/99 baseline of 11,026: an overall reduction of 25%. Sussex Police are still on target to achieve the national five-year target of a 30% reduction (7,718) with two years to go. The target for 2003/04 is to achieve a 3% reduction. The detection rate of 12% was disappointingly short of the target of 18% although Forest Division (Crawley, Horsham and Steyning areas) had achieved a creditable detection rate of 21.2%. Nationally, Sussex continued to have one of the lowest rates of burglary per 1,000 dwellings, but conversely one of the lowest detection rates.

3.6 Violent crime in a public place (VCP) increased by 5.4% (12,552) against the target of a 5% reduction. The NCRS had impacted here and work has been undertaken on ensuring the accuracy of recording of public place violence. This change had reversed the otherwise improving detection rate for all violent crime to 59% compared to the 65% target. No national comparison was available for VCP. As expected, however, the NCRS had affected Sussex much less than the rest of the country and the national comparison had moved Sussex from having one of the highest rates of violent crime per 1,000 population to mid-place in the second quartile.

3.7 Vehicle crime had reduced by 0.6% (to 21,108 offences) for the year against a target of a 6% reduction. Added to the previous years, vehicle crime had reduced overall since 1998/99 by 15% (from 25,140) against the national five-year target of 25% (18,855). The detection rate for vehicle crime had climbed slowly through the year to 7.4% against a target of 10%. Many of the detections had resulted from the investment in Forensic Vehicle Examiners. The national comparison in terms of vehicle crime per 1,000 population moved Sussex to a second quartile position, but the percentage of crimes detected had reduced with Sussex slipping very close to the fourth quartile.

3.8 On responses to emergency calls, 73% of such calls had been responded to within 15 minutes against a target of 80%. This was a new priority for 2002/03 and performance was consistent across divisions. The target remains unchanged for 2003/04.

3.9 With regard to Class A Drugs arrests, Operation Sceptre continued to be a strategic priority for the Force. Arrests for Class A drugs increased to 235 (up 66.7%) – well above the target of a 10% increase. This priority is continued into 2003/04 with the target of a further 5% increase.

3.10 The arrest rate for domestic violence incidents improved steadily and at the year's end stood at 77.4% against a target of 80%. Despite being just below target, this was a clear improvement over the figure for 2001/02 of 74.2%.

3.11 On racially aggravated crime, 46.7% of such 442 crimes had been detected – just 10 detections short of the target of 49%. The 2003/04 target is to increase the number of detections by 3%.

3.12 On road collisions, 83 fatal casualties and 894 serious casualties in 2002/03 was an improvement on the figures of 93 and 927 respectively in 2001/02, and was on course for achieving the national ten-year target for reducing fatalities and serious injuries.

There had been one fatal child casualty and 70 serious casualties, against two and 83 the year before. This was already below the figure set in the national target for 2010.

Conclusions

3.13 The Authority was very pleased that total crime in Sussex for the year had shown a decrease of 3.1% against a reduction target of 2%, given the reduction in the previous year, but was disappointed that the target of increasing the number of detections by 5% had not been achieved. Much greater efforts were needed to improve the detection rates for domestic burglary and vehicle crime. Work is being done to take that forward and to understand the priorities better. With regard to vehicle crime, the detection rate for vehicle crime had improved through the year mainly because of the impact of the Force Vehicle Examiners. These had been recruited to improve detection rates following a Best Value Review.

3.14 On detections, it is important to acknowledge that valuable experience and skills had been lost to other Forces particularly the Metropolitan Police, and significant resources had needed to be applied to investigating serious crime for which there had been a high success rate. The Police Authority's decisions to make additional money available in 2003/04 to recruit dedicated case managers and investigating officers and further increase police officer numbers and key support staff should all help to improve the detection rates in 2003/04 to meet the targets in the Policing Plan. The Force does not currently have as many police officers as comparable Forces. This is being addressed by the Authority in the current year's budget.

3.15 The Chief Constable chairs the Sussex Criminal Justice Board which has set itself targets aimed at bringing more offenders to justice.

3.16 With regard to major crime investigations, the Authority was pleased to note that there had been a 100% success rate with all major crimes being detected. This represented significant investment of resources, which reduced capacity to deal with other crime, as well as an achievement. The recent opening of the first major crime investigation suite in Brighton and Hove was another significant step.

3.17 The Authority know that steps are in hand for, and further resources will go into, improving detections and the Force are confident the position will be improved. It is very important that Force improved performance in a number of critical areas is properly recognised against the factors set out in the above paragraphs. Sussex remains a relatively safe place in which to live. The continuing overall crime reduction of 3.1% is a key achievement. In some cases, targets are part of national and local longer term targets. Where this is so, the Force is on course to achieve the longer term targets within the appropriate timescales. The Force Review should also start to deliver benefits. The Authority support the Chief Constable, the Force and all staff both in what has already been delivered and in their demonstration to further improve performance, and will continue to monitor the position closely.

4 Advances in the use of DNA

4.1 DNA profiling has revolutionised forensic science since its introduction in 1986. Prior to its introduction, the analysis of body fluids from crime scenes was performed by identifying a range of blood groupings present. The value of the evidence varied considerably and the ability of such evidence to discriminate between two individuals rarely exceeded one in every few hundred people. The introduction of DNA profiling greatly enhanced this discriminating power. In April 1995, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Forensic Science Service (FSS) introduced the world's first DNA database. At that time, DNA analysis was able to discriminate between two individuals to a level of approximately one in every 100,000 people. Even further advances since then have led to increased discriminatory power, with a full DNA profile often currently being reported as one in a billion.

4.2 Sussex Police have submitted over 45,000 samples taken from persons in police custody. Approximately 96% of these have been profiled and loaded onto the national DNA database. Over 7,000 samples recovered from crime scenes have been successfully profiled, resulting in the identification of over 4,500 suspects.

4.3 In Sussex, vehicle crime has traditionally accounted for a large percentage of all crime committed. In 1999/2000, this accounted for 18% of the total reported crime. In that year, scientific support staff examined 2,717 vehicles which had been the subject of crime, and produced 223 suspect identifications.

4.4 In order to improve vehicle crime performance, the Authority made an additional £320,000 available over one year for the recruitment of 16 specialist Forensic Vehicle Examiners (FVEs). They were given one year temporary contracts commencing in October 2000. After training, they became fully operational in November 2000. Their impact was immediate: 5,550 vehicles were examined and 493 suspects identified by the end of March 2001.

4.5 Following the start of the Sussex initiative, the Home Office announced that they intended making considerable additional funds available for the further expansion of the DNA database and invited Forces to bid for the funds.

4.6 The successful bid by Sussex, amounted to £4.3m over the three year period allowed for a total of 18 FVEs to be recruited and 5 FVE Controllers. Various other non-vehicle crime specific posts were also obtained under this programme, including 2 new Forensic Intelligence posts. Home Office funding for the expansion programme in Sussex during 2003/04 amounts to £1.1m for processing costs and £725,000 for support costs.

4.7 The Home Office recently indicated that Forces should assume for planning purposes that funding for the DNA expansion programme would continue at current levels in 2004/05 and 2005/06. Whilst not an absolute guarantee of future funding, it should prove helpful for planning purposes, particularly in respect of temporary employment contracts.

4.8 During 2001/02 (the first full year of FVE operation) 8,366 vehicles were examined resulting in 632 suspect identifications. In 2002/03, 7,641 vehicles were examined, resulting in 962 identifications. Statistically, the success of the FVE programme is unquestionable; illustrated by a significant increase in vehicle crime identifications over the past three years.

4.9 Another benefit to Sussex Police is that time previously spent by Scene of Crime Officers (SOCOs) on the examination of vehicles has been re-directed to other crime scenes. This has led to an all round improvement in scene attendance and successful outcomes. Indicative of this improved performance and productivity is a 50% increase in the level of forensic identifications for burglary dwelling offences over the three year period ending March 2003.

4.10 The challenge that the Force now faces is to convert a much greater percentage of forensic identifications into detections. Processes aimed at achieving this goal have recently been put in place.

4.11 Sussex Police were identified as having 'best practice' procedures in the 2001/02 DNA expansion programme evaluation report, commissioned by the Home Office. Procedures have since been enhanced, and a Force-wide model for the effective conversion of forensic 'hits' into detections has been produced and adopted by all divisions. This is now included in the Policing Strategy Standards and is applied as part of the Quality Focused Investigation into reported crime. The Authority anticipates that 2003/04 will see the Force converting the excellent work in increasing forensic identifications into greater numbers of offenders brought to justice.

5 Community Support Officers

5.1 The Police Authority was informed at its December meeting that a successful bid had been made to the Home Office for funding to recruit 22 Community Support Officers (CSOs) for Sussex. Subsequently, earlier this year, the Home Office invited all Forces to enter a second round of bidding. The Authority has again been successful in obtaining funding from this second round for a further 40 officers. In addition to the Home Office funded posts, North Downs Policing Division had obtained full funding from West Sussex County Council for a further 2 CSOs.

5.2 These additional 42 officers will join the 22 CSOs who are already providing a valuable visible presence across Sussex; supporting front-line policing and enhancing the overall performance of the Force.

5.3 The Home Office will fund 50% of the officers' salaries and on-costs for the next three years. The remainder of the three year funding has been identified from the Force budget and partners, including Neighbourhood Renewal (£300,000), East Sussex County Council (£200,000) and West Sussex County Council (£131,000).

5.4 The additional 42 officers should be appointed in mid August 2003. It is anticipated that they will be deployed as follows:

- Ten to West Downs Policing Division (Adur, Arun Chichester and Worthing Districts)
- Five to Brighton and Hove
- Twelve to North Downs (Crawley, Mid Sussex and Horsham Districts)
- Six to Senlac (Hastings and Rother Districts)
- Nine to East Downs (Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden Districts).

5.5 The overall total of 64 CSOs (the 42 to be recruited and the 22 currently employed) will be deployed as follows:-

- Fifteen to West Downs
- Ten to Brighton and Hove
- Sixteen to North Downs
- Ten to Senlac
- Thirteen to East Downs

5.6 CSOs will work a shift pattern and will be directed via their divisional Superintendent 'Crime and Operations.' All the training given to the CSOs will be carried out by their divisional training officers and will include first aid, legislation, unarmed defence tactics and a period of tutoring.

5.7 The uniform worn by CSOs will continue to be in line with the guidance issued by the Home Office; it is similar to that worn by a police officer except that the hat band and epaulettes are in blue. The badges on their uniform and their reflective jackets identify them as CSOs. Those authorities which make a separate contribution are entitled to have this reflected discreetly on vehicles and uniforms.

5.8 Although the initial 22 CSOs recruited in March 2003 have only been on patrol for approximately three months, their presence and visibility have already begun to have an effect. Their deployment to areas identified as crime and problem 'hotspots' is reducing crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Their powers have allowed them to intervene at an early stage, thus preventing any escalation of a situation. They have been used to support front-line policing in various roles, including carrying out house to house enquiries and scene guard duties.

5.9 Whilst on patrol, CSOs have encountered recently committed crimes. They have summoned the assistance of police officers and supported them in the identification and arrest of offenders. They have also assisted in many policing operations at both divisional and Force level.

5.10 CSOs have already become an important part of the 'Extended Police Family' in Sussex. The current 22 CSOs have enhanced the service to the community provided by Sussex Police and our partners. The additional 42 CSOs will further enhance that service to the people of Sussex.

MARK DUNN

Chairman

5 June 2003

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