

# REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

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The Sussex Police Authority met at County Hall, Chichester, on Thursday, 12 February 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 M Dean, Miss A Graves, Mrs M D Johnson DL, Mr P Jones (Vice-Chairman), Mr J Mortimer, 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 Revenue Budget 2004/05 and Capital Programme to 2006/07

### (a) Background

1.1 The Police Authority has considered its budget for 2004/05 against the following background :-

- the finance settlement from the Government being insufficient to meet the requirements of national and local policing priorities;
- the Authority's comparative position with other authorities in having below average net spending on policing per thousand population, below average police officer numbers, and below average council tax;
- feedback from public consultations in Sussex on the public's expectations and needs;
- Ministers giving notice that the Government will consider capping any authority with an excessive council tax rise in 2004/05; and
- the impact of borrowing freedoms introduced under the Local Government Act 2003.

1.2 The Government's final police grant settlement for 2004/05, released on 29 January 2004, was largely unchanged from the provisional settlement announced last November. Consequently, the Police Authority still had serious concerns about the overall level of settlement falling well short of what is needed to meet inflation and other unavoidable commitments, and about the Authority's underlying financial position under the new, but temporarily suspended, police funding formula. The Authority was also disappointed that none of the additional grant of £340m to local authorities announced by the Chancellor in his pre-budget statement had been allocated to police authorities.

1.3 The Chief Constable's proposals for consideration by the Authority were aimed at (a) proposed service developments driven by policing plan priorities and the objectives of the Strategic Plan; and (b) the Authority's support for the key service developments of extending the police family by recruiting additional Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and developing public contact by investing in a Crime Recording and Investigation Bureau (CRIB).

1.4 The Authority considered the proposals for 2004/05 in light of the significant developments made during 2003/04 as a result of the increased budget for policing services. These included: recruitment of an additional 40 police officers by 31 March 2004 to bring police officer strength to 3,140; recruitment of 21 experienced case directors and 30 accredited investigative officers and the further civilianisation of police officer posts which together had released 32 police officers for front-line duties; provision of personal protective vests to all front-line Sussex police officers; funding for the running of the Major Incident Suites and the creation of the Major Crime Branch; funding for training and equipment for additional scenes of crimes officers; and dealing with a backlog of maintenance work. These

measures had principally been aimed at increasing police visibility on the streets and improving detection rates.

(b) Consultations

1.5 Consultations were undertaken on the performance of Sussex Police, the present level of council tax for policing, possible budget options, value for money, and where the public would wish to see the money spent on policing issues. In summary, almost a quarter of respondents agreed to some extent that the police provided value for money, but nearly a third disagreed; a third considered that the performance of Sussex Police had improved to some extent over the past twelve months, almost a third had seen no change in performance and less than a third felt that performance had worsened; about half of all respondents felt that the present level of council tax for policing was too high against a quarter of respondents feeling that the level was just right and 15% feeling it was too low. On prioritising policing services, the highest priority was given to anti-social behaviour, followed by emergency response, community policing and crime investigation.

(c) Budget Planning

1.6 The budget planning process had confirmed that increasing uniformed police presence in Sussex was the highest priority in order to deal with the issues raised in the responses to the consultation. The Authority had recognised the need to increase police officer numbers in agreeing its budget for 2003/04 so as to move Sussex from having one of the lowest ratios of police officers to population in England and Wales towards a more average level. The target was to increase police officer strength to 3,500 full time equivalents (fte) by 31 March 2006. In view of the anticipated levels of recruitment, it is proposed that the target number of police officers should remain at 3,152 fte officers and that the number of PCSOs should be increased in 2004/05. The increased number of PCSOs will enable the Authority to meet its targets to enhance police visibility, reassure the public, and tackle anti-social behaviour.

1.7 Last October, the Police Authority gave its support in principle to developing the extended police family, in particular by increasing the number of PCSOs, to increase police visibility. The budget proposals now considered by the Authority included increasing the number of PCSOs in Sussex by between 130 and 200 fte staff in 2004/05.

1.8 The proposals also reflected the Authority's intention to continue with recent improvements in investigating and recording crime and improving public contact. Establishment of a Crime Recording and Investigation Bureau (CRIB) and associated developments would provide a 24 hour, 7 day a week crime recording and investigation facility for the public. This would improve public contact for people wishing to report crime by telephone and allow for the quicker investigation of crime. It would also provide for significant improvements to be made in emergency call-taking, command and control, and faster, more appropriate response to incidents. These measures would allow the Force to reduce the time taken to answer non-emergency calls and improve the quality of call handling.

1.9 The Police Authority was informed in detail of the performance benefits of the proposed service developments.

(d) Budget Options and Strategy

1.10 Various budget options were considered. The Authority agreed to support the budget option which will entail recruiting 150 additional PCSOs by 1 July 2004 and fully

implement establishment of the CRIB and associated developments as described in paragraph 1.8 above. The additional PCSOs will complement police officer numbers and not replace them.

1.11 The distribution of the additional PCSOs will be as follows:-

<i>Policing division, including crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs)</i>	<i>Proposed deployment of additional 150 PCSOs</i>	<i>Current number at February 2004</i>	<i>Minimum number of PCSOs by 31 March 2005</i>
Senlac – Hastings and Rother CDRPs	22	12	34
East Downs – Wealden, Lewes and Eastbourne CDRPs	26	11	37
West Downs – Chichester, Arun, Worthing and Adur CDRPs	38	15	53
Brighton & Hove	35	20	55
North Downs – Horsham and Mid-Sussex CDRPs	29	16	45
Totals	150	74	224

1.12 The budget strategy also sought to continue getting more out of current resources and achieve annual efficiency savings. Indeed, the Force is on course this year to exceed its efficiency target of £4.2m. This is the sixth financial year that the Home Office have formally required each police authority to achieve 2% efficiency gains year-on-year. The Authority noted that total efficiency gains of £25.6m would be achieved by the end of 2004/05. This is a significant achievement.

1.13 In addition to these efficiency savings, further savings of £1m have been identified in 2004/05 and a further £1m in 2005/06 to be applied for re-investment elsewhere in the Authority's budget.

1.14 The Police Negotiating Board agreement on pay and conditions in May 2002 included a requirement to reduce the national police overtime bill to provide a better work/ life balance for police officers. The agreement set a national target of a 15% reduction in overall expenditure on overtime in three years starting from 2003/04. In Sussex, the Authority endorsed targets for reducing overtime by 5% in 2003/04, 7.5% in 2004/05 and 15% in 2005/06. The Force is on course to achieve the 2003/04 target.

1.15 The Authority considered the budget options in light of its decision on 18 December 2003 to ask the officers to include borrowing options in their further work on the budget and the impact of keeping the council tax increase below 10%.

1.16 The Local Government Act 2003 introduced "prudential borrowing" arrangements supported by a CIPFA Code which authorities are required to comply with from 2004/05. The Code replaces the present complex regulatory framework and sets out the indicators that it expects authorities to use and the factors they must take into account to demonstrate that their plans are prudent, sustainable and affordable.

1.17 In agreeing its budget for next year, the Authority set a maximum operational borrowing limit of £1.5m for outstanding debt and an authorised borrowing limit of £16.5m including £15m of borrowing for temporary cash flow purposes. The Police Authority has no

long term debt at present and would normally expect to borrow at fixed rates and so agreed that the limit on fixed rate debt be set to match the authorised borrowing limit.

1.18 Having considered the requirements of the capital programme, together with the pressures placed on the revenue budget, the Authority has agreed to enter into long term borrowing from April 2004. The amount to be borrowed over the three year period of the Authority's medium term financial forecast is £3.750m which is broadly in line with the Home Office levels of capital expenditure supported in the finance settlement.

(e) Budget for 2004/05 and Capital Programme

1.19 The Police Authority has agreed a revenue budget for 2004/05 of £221.648m which will result in an increase of 7.55% in the policing element of council tax (for a Band D property) – an increase of 14 pence per week compared to 2003/04. This will allow the service improvements referred to in paragraphs 1.7 and 1.8 above to be implemented in order to meet the priorities set out in the Policing Plan for 2004/05.

1.20 The Police Authority has also agreed a capital programme for 2004/05 of £9.152m which will fund (a) projects with Force-wide implications such as the NEMESIS project which will replace the crime information system, and the Airwave radio project; (b) the replacement of vehicles in line with the Fleet Strategy; (c) improvements to the IT infrastructure, support system and some smaller projects in line with the IT Strategy; (d) replacement of other technical equipment; and (e) implementation of improvement and redevelopment schemes in line with the Estates Strategy.

(f) Council Tax on Second Homes

1.21 The Local Government Act 2003 allows billing authorities (Brighton & Hove City Council and the district councils in East Sussex and West Sussex) to change the level of council tax discount on second homes from 1 April 2004. In those circumstances, the billing authority is obliged to share the additional council tax income raised as a result with the relevant precepting authorities such as the Police Authority.

1.22 With the exception of Brighton & Hove, district and borough councils in Sussex have indicated that they will be changing the level of discount and that additional funds of £0.430m will be available to the Authority. The Authority has agreed that the sums received by the Authority from the reduction of discounts on second homes should be spent on police and community safety initiatives that reflect neighbourhood and district priorities. Subject to further discussions with the local authorities concerned, these initiatives could include, for example, the recruitment of additional PCSOs over and above those for which provision is made in the Authority's 2004/05 budget. The budget has been prepared on the basis that this income is matched by offsetting expenditure and, therefore, the effect of the proposal is neutral on the Authority's budget overall.

## **2 Local Policing Plan 2004/05**

2.1 The Police Authority has considered its Draft Local Policing Plan for Sussex 2004/05. It has been prepared following consultation through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), reference to public opinion surveys and the Home Office and takes account of the National Policing Plan 2004-2007. It summarises the aims and priorities for Sussex Police for 2004/05 and the progress made in 2003/04.

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2.2 In summary, the local priorities and aims for 2004/05 are:-

Priority 1 – Citizen Focus – to provide a service, especially to victims and witnesses, tailored to the needs of individuals and local communities and inspiring satisfaction and confidence. The indicators of this are set out in the Draft Plan. Nationally and locally, Citizen Focused policing has emerged as a key area of service development.

Priority 2 – Promoting Public Safety and Providing Assistance – in much of Sussex, the risk of being a victim of crime is low, but the fear of crime is high, often stoked by low level disorder. The Authority wishes to reduce the fear of crime and the insecurity that fear creates by increasing highly visible, local patrol based services delivered through neighbourhood policing teams, with an emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour.

Priority 3 – Preventing and Reducing Crime – the Authority aims to reduce the occurrence of crime, in particular burglary of peoples' homes, crimes of violence, including robbery, and vehicle crime through focused partnership work and intelligence led policing interventions. Problems will be identified and long term solutions applied through the CDRPs and by using the National Intelligence Model to assess crime at all levels.

Priority 4 – Investigating Crime – the Force will be a leading partner within the Sussex Criminal Justice System and will detect more crime and increase the number of offenders brought to justice.

Priority 5 – Getting Value for Money – the Authority and the Force will aim to achieve “best value” from our resources and develop an effective framework to ensure resources are directed in the most effective way to support our priorities. One of the priorities will be to increase the proportion of police officer time available for front line policing.

2.3 The draft plan sets out progress made against the Local Policing Plan for 2003/04. The Authority has welcomed the progress made in delivering the new policing arrangements through establishing 42 neighbourhood policing teams each reporting to an Inspector which enables local police to resolve local problems. Alongside this, the Force has opened, and in some cases re-opened, public reception areas at many Sussex police stations and increased the general opening hours across Sussex. New police stations have been provided in Worthing and Littlehampton with much improved access, and facilities for local people. Work has also started on refurbishing the front offices in 18 rural police stations across Sussex to provide better facilities for local people.

2.4 The increase in opening hours at police stations has been supported by the introduction of Police Neighbourhood Support Officers who are uniformed police staff, providing expert advice and assistance to visitors at the police stations.

2.5 The number of police officers in operational posts has grown through increased levels of recruitment and the Force's civilianisation programme. The number of Sussex Police Officers at 31 March 2004 is forecasted at 3,152. In addition, the Force recruited 74 Police Community Support Officers (PCOs) in 2003/04. They provide valuable support to neighbourhood policing teams and increase policing visibility on the streets. In addition, efforts are being made to increase the numbers of special constables attached to neighbourhood policing teams.

2.6 Working in partnership is a key to achieving sustainable reductions in crime and disorder. The Authority and the Force will continue to play an active leading part in the local CDRPs across Sussex.

2.7 The Authority has agreed the proposed format and content of its Local Policing Plan for 2004/05 subject to further work being undertaken in order to include information on its budget, numbers of police staff, and targets for 2004/05.

2.8 The final version of the Plan will be published by 31 March 2004 and a limited number of hard copies will be printed for circulation. The Plan will be published on the Sussex Police Authority website and a summary will be published as a leaflet and available for general distribution.

### **3 Findings on the issues raised by the case of R –v- Huntley**

3.1 Following the conclusion of R –v- Huntley (the Soham murders case), an independent inquiry was ordered to consider the issues surrounding the sharing of intelligence information as set out in Humberside and Cambridgeshire Constabularies' procedures. Sussex Police took the opportunity of examining the same issues to ensure that the processes in Sussex are robust and that any lessons learnt are implemented immediately.

3.2 The Sussex internal review adopted the terms of reference of the independent inquiry being undertaken by Sir Michael Bichard and focused on four specific areas - child protection procedures; the effectiveness of the relevant intelligence information based record keeping practices; vetting practices since 1995; and information sharing with other agencies.

3.3 The Authority was pleased to note that the local review had found that Sussex Police have sound policies and procedures in place to ensure that adequate checks are made on those people who have contact with children. The Force's databases retain intelligence information and files are retained in accordance with Force policy and the Criminal Information System (CIS) manual. For major crimes and offences involving children, files are retained indefinitely, even where a suspect is not convicted at court. If a file is taken off the police national computer (PNC), the Force still retains the intelligence relating to that case and it will be highlighted on an enhanced vetting check.

3.4 All policy is reviewed to ensure it complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights. Guidance on disclosure is very clear, both in legislation and in Force policy.

3.5 The Force has protocols established for the sharing of data between other forces and statutory agencies involving children. These are effectively adhered to and the Data Protection Officer is working on a co-ordinated framework for the Force.

3.6 Several pieces of legislation permit the sharing of data with other government agencies and partners/third parties. These include the Crime Procedures and Investigations Act 1996, Data Protection Act 1998 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Data Protection Act does not prevent the Force from sharing information with other agencies as long as the data is held in accordance with the eight principles set out in the Act. Likewise, it does not prevent other agencies providing Sussex Police with information as long as they abide by the principles. However, due to misunderstandings about the legislation, there is a reluctance on the part of some organisations to share data over fear of litigation.

3.7 Protocols have been established specifically for sharing information about children with statutory agencies and this should ensure that the safety of children is paramount.

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3.8 The Authority has welcomed the findings of the internal review by Sussex Police into the issues raised by the Soham case and has approved the action taken by the Force. This includes (a) ensuring there are appropriate links with the Information Exchange Officers in the policing divisions; (b) consistent application of policies across the Force; (c) introduction of a Force-wide mechanism for capturing instances of disclosure so that a comprehensive audit trail can be maintained; and (d) introducing additional training in data protection and issues around disclosure of information for key members of staff and to extend this, as appropriate, to CDRPs.

#### **4 Joint Initiative Fund 2004/05**

4.1 The Authority has considered proposals aimed at improving the management of the Joint Initiative Fund (JIF) which was established in 1996 to provide one-off pump-priming grants for crime prevention/diversionary projects and other related crime reduction initiatives across Sussex. Basically, administration of the JIF has remained substantially the same since its inception, with 50% of the JIF budget held by the Force and accessed through District Commanders and the Force's Community Safety Office and 50% held by the Police Authority and accessed through the Clerk's Office and the Authority's Community Engagement Steering Group. As a result of the new responsibilities placed upon the Police Authority by the Police Reform Act 2002, the Authority had slightly amended the existing arrangements for distributing its part of the JIF with effect from April 2003 by allocating each CDRP a ring-fenced amount of money.

4.2 The proposals for improving the management of the Fund were considered alongside work being undertaken by the Audit Commission on the partnership work of the Authority and Sussex Police.

4.3 The Authority has agreed that, in future, starting in 2004/05, the JIF should be treated as a single budget and not be split between the Force and the Authority. This will simplify the process for both applicants and administrators of the Fund. There will be three parts to the Fund. These are:-

- (a) CDRP JIF – 40% of the agreed budget – this will consist of an equal split of 7% of the budget for each of the 12 CDRPs and 16% for the Brighton & Hove Partnership. Allocations will be made to the CDRPs at the beginning of the financial year on the understanding that all JIF funded projects should still meet the original JIF criteria established by the Authority and the Force and be approved by both the relevant Police Authority member on the CDRP and the District Commander. CDRPs will receive and process applications and, within the existing project management procedures, be expected to monitor all JIF funded projects. The Authority's Member Support Officers will liaise with the CDRPs and keep the Authority's Steering Group informed of progress;
- (b) JIF "core" / recurring projects – 30% of the agreed budget – a number of projects generally operate across the whole of Sussex and their continued funding by the Authority through the JIF is fundamental to their continued existence. These include Victim Support, Sussex Neighbourhood Watch Federation, mediation services, and Crimestoppers. Subject to the annual budget provision, "core" funding should continue for these organisations at the same level and funding decisions should be reviewed annually at the start of the financial year;

- (c) JIF central contingency fund - 30% of the agreed budget – this money will be kept back for new “cross-boundary” or other exceptional projects which emerge over the year. This will be administered as a single budget and be an integrated scheme jointly managed by officers of the Authority and the Force.

4.4 The existing Scheme of Delegations to Chief Officers will be amended to effect the necessary changes to the management of the JIF with effect from 1 April 2004.

MARK DUNN  
*Chairman*

12 February 2004