

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at Sackville House, Lewes, on 28 October 2010

Attendances:

Dr L Bush (Chairman), Mr S Waight (Vice-Chairman), Mr L Barnard, Mr P Bratton, Prof G Bull, Ms E Daniel, Mr G Daniel JP, Mr B Duncan, Mr F Faiz, Mr P Jones, Mr A Price JP, Mrs C Shaves MBE JP, Mr A Smith, Mr R Tidy and Dr R Walker.

The Police Authority considered a wide range of policing issues at the meeting, including the following matters. The full set of reports to the Police Authority can be accessed on the Authority's website www.sussexpoliceauthority.gov.uk

1. Serving Sussex 2015

1.1 The Authority and Sussex Police are undertaking a comprehensive review of policing Sussex in order to develop a policing model which will be relevant for future years and within a context where significant budgetary savings need to be made. The Authority is very actively involved in every stage of the programme, including chairing the Serving Sussex 2015 Strategic Board; membership of the Delivery Group and full member engagement in each of the work streams.

1.2 This comprehensive review of policing in Sussex will touch every part of the delivery of policing and includes redesigning how crime is investigated, with a new structure that improves service to victims and at the same time costs less. Meanwhile increased use of the internet will broaden the way people can access policing, with the type of fast and convenient service already commonplace in many other sectors.

1.3 All areas of the Authority's expenditure are being subjected to close scrutiny. This includes divisions and departments identifying potential savings in addition to the themes being examined by Serving Sussex 2015 workstreams. It is anticipated that the programme is likely to affect more than one thousand police officer (500) and staff posts (550). A number of voluntary schemes to help reduce the impact on individuals within Sussex Police have been detailed to officers and staff. The Authority welcomed that over and above the formal consultation process the Force is working closely with Unison, the Police Federation and Superintendents' Association to ensure officers and staff are supported throughout the challenges and the changes ahead. Reducing bureaucracy will also be an important part of the drive to cut costs.

1.4 As part of the Review the Authority has asked the Chief Constable to review the Force's fleet to ensure that the overall size and shape of the fleet is appropriate, affordable and cost effective in the current economic and operational climate. The Authority has agreed that a target to reduce the size of the owned fleet by ten per cent, over three financial years commencing on 1 April 2011, would mean a total reduction of 321 vehicles or 27 per cent of the current fleet. To achieve a reduction in running costs will require a significant change in approach to the use of the

vehicles across the Force. Mileages reductions of approximately ten per cent have been identified as possible by implementing such changes.

1.5 The outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review was announced on 20 October 2010 which provided details of total funding for government departments next year and the medium term. The actual budget impact is anticipated to be available for individual police authorities and local authorities in late November or early December. The proposed savings targets set by the Serving Sussex Programme are based on the mid case position which equates to £52.2m by 2015. Within this total the Authority has been set a savings target of £80,000 per year from 2011 through to 2015 and has made a number of proposals to make savings to the cost of democracy.

1.6 The Authority's continued investment in neighborhood policing is highly valued by the public and has transformed the lives of people in some Sussex communities. The Authority and Sussex Police remain committed to neighborhood policing and the coterminous (divisional and district) model, which enables effective partnership working with our local authority partners. Many police buildings are expensive to run and not conveniently located for the public to use. Detailed analysis of visitors to police stations has evidenced changing customer needs. By making relatively small changes to the use of front offices, it is clear that money can be saved whilst still meeting customer expectations. Better use of police buildings will result in further savings. Discussions are underway with partners with the aim of sharing facilities wherever possible. This may mean offering the public different ways of getting in touch with the police that are more convenient for them, but cost less than maintaining expensive and inconveniently located buildings that are not widely used by the public. On 19 November 2010 the Authority will host a seminar for local authority leaders and chief executives, along with other key public sector partners. This event will provide an excellent opportunity to progress these and other partnership ideas.

1.7 The Authority and the Chief Constable have accepted that there is a need to strengthen the resolve to disrupt organised criminal gangs and those individuals who target the most vulnerable in society. One of the ways of achieving this, while driving down costs, is looking at working more closely with Surrey Police. The plan is that, by 2015, resilience will be improved at the same time as savings are realised. Discussions are taking place with Surrey and agreement is being sought to scope this work.

2. Communications Department overview of structure and services

2.1 Extensive work is underway within contact management which itself represents a significant opportunity to influence public confidence in policing in Sussex. Much investment in services has been undertaken by the Authority, which includes the CCTV upgrade programme which was completed in December 2009, on time and overall under budget. CCTV in Sussex is a partnership, with 17 local authorities owning the majority of public space cameras and Sussex Police monitoring them. Key to the accountability process is a partnership governance process and the recent and innovative Police Authority Independent Monitoring Scheme. Thanks were extended to the volunteers who undertake the responsibility of monitoring the CCTV footage for the Authority on behalf of the public.

2.2 In 2009-10 the Force received 247,272 emergency calls with 98.2 per cent answered within the target time of ten seconds with the average time taken to answer a call being 3.6 seconds. This placed Sussex in second place nationally. The Police Contact Centre answered 67 per cent of the 560,721 non-emergency calls within 60 seconds for the 2009-10 performance year therefore not yet reaching the 75 per cent target. The development of the Sussex Police website for crime and incident reporting was discussed and welcomed as an alternative method of crime reporting for members of the public.

3. Mental Health Act 1983 – places of safety and partnership working

3.1 The Authority has sought and received reassurance over a number of years concerning alternative places of safety for people detained under the Act or who come into the Criminal Justice System. For several years the emphasis has been to move away from a police station being the accepted place of safety, which has been welcomed. This is an important principle that helps ensure appropriate access to assessment, treatment and facilities whilst retaining dignity for people at the time of enhanced vulnerability.

3.2 Currently there are five places of safety across Sussex, provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. In the quarter one for FY 2010-11, a total of 508 people were detained under S136 Mental Health Act 1983. Of these people, 357 were detained in police custody and 151 were detained in the hospital place of safety.

3.3 The Sussex Police Mental Health Liaison Officer has advised that following a recent case, the Brighton Coroner had made recommendations and expressed a clear desire to see improvements to services provided for people detained under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and the Authority and Sussex Police are working with key partners regarding these issues.

Laurie Bush
Chairman

28 October 2010

