

REPORT OF THE SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

The Sussex Police Authority met at County Hall, Lewes on 10 December 2009. Attendances:

Dr L Bush (Chairman), Mr L Barnard, Mr P Bratton, Prof G Bull, Mr G Daniel, Mr B Duncan, Mr P Evans, Mrs S Knight, Mr A Price JP, Mrs C Shaves MBE JP, Mr A Smith, Mr R Tidy, Mr S Waight (Vice-Chairman) 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. Community Engagement

1.1 The Authority receives regular reports on its community engagement consultation programme and has welcomed the increase in the number of contacts made with members of the public at various events around Sussex, which was considerably in excess of numbers in previous years. The objective of these consultation events is to seek people's views on policing and take these into account when setting the budget, and the objectives and targets within the Local Policing Plan (LPP) which will be approved in February 2010.

1.2 The Authority has developed an extensive programme for consulting the public at events across Sussex such as the South of England Show. Events are held at places and times which give people easy access to members of the Police Authority, for example in shopping precincts, supermarkets and at community events. The results of the wide ranging consultation help the Authority to ensure that policing in Sussex tackles both serious and organised crime and meets local neighbourhood policing needs. The Authority is particularly pleased that more than half the people consulted were made with young people under the age of 18 as this was previously a largely under-represented group. The majority of concerns raised by the public relate to anti-social behaviour and traffic issues, including speeding and anti-social driving. Both adults and young people supported the idea of more police officers patrolling neighbourhoods as a priority.

1.3 The Authority and Sussex Police are key stakeholders in the pan-Sussex shared consultation project which has been funded by the Sussex Improvement Partnership (SIP). The Partnership involves East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and a number of district and borough councils in Sussex, as well as the Primary Care Trusts and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service. The SIP shares the results of completed research and consultations, and seek opportunities to work more collaboratively on future consultations.

2. Local Confidence Surveys

2.1 The Authority considered a report on the local confidence surveys and welcomed the positive feedback and high number of surveys undertaken. The government have set the police the task of increasing public confidence in the police and local authority working together as measured by the British Crime Survey (BCS). The local survey has generated results that indicate much higher levels of confidence than the BCS data; this is understandable given the different methodologies.

2.2 A number of correlations were found between police officer behaviour and public confidence, including visibility, effective response engagement levels and communication. From these aspects of police activity, reliability and effectiveness were identified as the key drivers behind confidence. The results of the first round of local confidence surveys have afforded a deeper insight into the drivers of public confidence in Sussex Police.

2.3 The Authority and Sussex Police will consider the implications of these results in the design of performance targets for the Local Policing Plan 2010-13 which will impact positively on public confidence. The Authority has asked Sussex Police to consider producing local results of public confidence based on policing Divisions and Districts.

2.4 The Committee welcomed the news that initial findings of local confidence are positive. It is hoped that the surveys will assist the Authority and Sussex Police to better understand the drivers for public confidence which may help shape the way that policing is delivered in Sussex. The Authority feels that performance in this regard to increase public satisfaction should be considered for inclusion within the LPP for 2010-13.

3. Domestic Abuse

3.1 Sussex Police is making good progress in protecting vulnerable people and tackling domestic abuse. The Authority has considered a report exploring the changing approaches to tackling domestic abuse, examining the validity of current measures of performance and suggesting ways to better measure performance in the future.

3.2 The positive arrest policy adopted by Sussex Police is a very effective way of tackling domestic abuse. Victims are often isolated and vulnerable and removal of the offender allows the victim time to consider what action they would like taken, and gives the police an opportunity for evidence gathering. Arrangements are in place to assist in managing the risk to victims at a neighbourhood level.

3.3 The Authority has been re-assured that a great deal of partnership working is underway to protect victims of domestic abuse and has requested that a further concentrating on this partnership work.

4. Meeting with Leaders and Chief Executives of Sussex Local Authorities

4.1 The Authority and Sussex Police hosted a very productive meeting with Leaders and Chief Executives of Sussex Local Authorities themed under the title “Maintaining public confidence in a challenging financial environment: a shared challenge for the public sector in Sussex”. The majority of the meeting was allocated to discussions on what could be achieved together to meet the funding shortfalls that were forecasted in public spending. Concerns were raised that key services could not be continued if the financial forecasts are to be believed and that partnership strategies may not be enough to get through the upcoming challenges. It was agreed that there should be enhanced communications and partnership between the public and local government in order to understand the ramifications of budget cuts.

4.2 It was felt that there was a need to consider greater collaboration between authorities to share resources such as legal services, financial services, accommodation, IT platforms and administrative centres. There was general consensus that there were potentially large scale benefits arising from sharing individual agency proposals for service developments and capital programmes. West Sussex County Council and East Sussex County Council are to organise a county wide conference to begin practical discussions for examining the possibilities of asset sharing and collaboration. A number of actions were agreed to achieve practical ways of enhancing collaboration with both the public and private partners across Sussex.

DR LAURIE BUSH
Chairman

December 2009

