



End of Term Report

Bill Longmore, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner
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Foreword

It's incredible to think how quickly time has passed, since I was at the election count in Shrewsbury, anxious to find out how the public had voted in the first ever Police and Crime Commissioner elections. I felt so proud to win, and it has been an honour to serve and represent the people of West Mercia.

Time really has marched on at an incredible pace since that day in November 2012. For me, that's probably the best illustration of just how busy and challenging my role has been, and how much has been packed into a comparatively short period. As I prepare to leave office, there are still of course things I wish I could have achieved, or projects I wanted to finish, but I've learned that this isn't a world where things conveniently stand still. Time inevitably catches up with all of us, and we have to entrust our legacy to those following on behind us. My best wishes to whoever emerges victorious from the next PCC elections, I hope I am leaving you a solid foundation to build on.

In the days after the PCC elections, someone said something to me, which really struck a chord, so much so that I put their quote on the wall in my office, and they have stayed there ever since. It reads:

"You are a manifestation of localism.
A species rarely heard or seen in your new
found environment. Guard your colours,
as the slightest hint of allegiance will label
you leaning one way or the other".

Those words have stuck with me throughout my time in office. I have always maintained that I don't think policing and politics should mix, and I have worked to protect my independence throughout my term. Independence has not meant 'isolation' though. Instead, I have tried to use it as an open invitation, to bring people together from all corners of politics and society, embracing input from all political viewpoints, rather than excluding those that might otherwise be 'inconvenient'. I think that kind of positivity and openness has been key in building such an extensive network of partners and working contacts over the last few years. It has been wonderful and refreshing to see almost every person and organisation engaging with myself and my team, keen to work together and work to make things better, with no agenda other than helping the public.

I'm aware that the introduction of PCCs was in itself a source of uncertainty for some people. I would be the first to admit that some Commissioners have been more successful than others, and that there are still some wrinkles to iron out with the PCC system. Despite that though, it seems clear to me that Police and Crime Commissioners have, in general, been a success.

In crude terms, the system costs less and does more. That is an overly simplistic view though, and I think the role it plays in bringing the police closer to the communities they serve has been incredibly important and benefits everyone. I am very pleased that the Commissioner role will continue for the foreseeable future, although I'm sure it will continue to evolve over time.

It has undoubtedly been an unprecedented period of change and transformation for policing in England and Wales – particularly within West Mercia. Continued funding cuts from government coupled with the emerging strategic alliance with Warwickshire have made it an incredibly complex few years. Clearly when there is less money, things have had to be done differently, and I am proud of the innovative, efficient ways we have gone about making changes locally. They aren't all changes I would have chosen to make in an ideal world, but they have all been necessary. The focus throughout has always been on sustaining the level of service people get, and even improving it where possible, along with ensuring the best possible value for public money, and leaving the most sustainable model of policing possible. Everyone will have their opinions and priorities, but I am proud of the work that has gone on in West Mercia. In many respects we have set the standards that others are now trying to follow.

I must take this opportunity to say thank you to a few specific people. Firstly, to Chief Constable David Shaw, and the rest of the officers and staff of the West Mercia police force. I feel fortunate to have enjoyed such a good and constructive relationship with the Chief, built on a mutual respect and commitment to serving the public. David's professionalism and positive attitude has been exemplary, and I feel West Mercia is lucky to have such an excellent Chief Constable, leading a fine police force.

I am very grateful to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel for their scrutiny and constructive feedback throughout my time in office. The panel has been considered, insightful and fair, and I am very thankful for their approach.



West Mercia Police and Crime Panel meeting, Hereford, 2015. Left to right: Andy Champness, CEO of the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, Barrie Sheldon, Deputy PCC, Bill Longmore, Police and Crime Commissioner, Councillor Brian Wilcox JP, Chair of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, Elizabeth Hall, Treasurer of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Councillor Tony Miller, Deputy Chair of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, David Shaw, Chief Constable of West Mercia Police

Thank you as well to my Deputy, Barrie Sheldon, who has worked so hard and shared my vision for trying to make our communities even better places. Barrie has been part of my work as PCC from the very start, and put in countless late nights, travelled thousands of miles, and attended many hundreds of meetings and public events. I must also thank the staff in my office, who have worked so hard to try and make my vision a reality.



Partnership working was a major priority for me when I came to office, and trying to achieve more by working together. I have

been very fortunate to build up a huge range of partnerships— including councils, emergency services, charities, sports clubs, community groups, health organisations, community interest companies, prisons, universities and many more. These were all people and organisations who shared common goals – wanting to help people, and make West Mercia a safer, happier place. I am very grateful to all of them for their commitment, and hope their fantastic work will continue for many years to come.

Given the nature of our local forces and their strategic alliance, there have been no bigger partners in my work than Warwickshire PCC Ron Ball, his Deputy Eric Wood, Warwickshire's current Chief Constable Martin Jelley, and his predecessor Andy Parker. Their commitment to the alliance model has been crucial. Naturally, we have not always agreed on everything, but I am grateful for their dedication to the arrangement which has helped make the alliance such a success to date.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the people of West Mercia. My first priority has always been to be an honest and strong voice for the public. I have only been able to do that though because the people have given me that opportunity to represent them. Whether that's been casting votes, telling me their problems, giving me their views, sharing their successes, coming to events or filling in surveys, the people of West Mercia have told me time and time again what they have wanted. I have always listened, and done everything possible to try and help. You can never please everyone, but trying to help people has been the driving force behind everything I have done.

Over the last few years in this role, there have been so many miles on the clock, late nights, early mornings, events and people to meet. I have honestly enjoyed every minute of it though, whether that was looking at local policing initiatives, or meeting neighbourhood

Left to right: West Mercia Chief Constable David Shaw, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner Bill Longmore, Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner Ron Ball, and Warwickshire Chief Constable Martin Jelley



watch groups, or visiting sports clubs or talking to charities. Every day I've had the chance to work with inspirational, selfless, devoted people who have all just wanted the same thing – to help people, and build stronger, safer, happier communities.

The role has taught me so much about people and society, and has been more demanding than I could ever have imagined, but I feel I have learned so much. Whether that was around people skills, financial management, bringing people together, diplomacy, setting strategic plans, building relationships and partnerships, politics, communications, understanding changing patterns around crime, the modernisation of policing, commissioning services

for victims, holding the Chief to account, different demographics of people and faiths, public engagement, or ensuring value for money. These are all skills and subjects I have had to know about as Police and Crime Commissioner, and purely from a personal level, it has been wonderful to learn so much from such a wide range of people and circumstances.

It has been a pleasure to serve as your Police and Crime Commissioner in West Mercia. I only wish I was 10 years younger to run for election again.

Bill Longmore

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

Policing

Overview

The delivery of an efficient and effective Police Service has sat at the very heart of my police and crime plan. The need for efficiency has been clear, and would have been an issue to address regardless of the Government's austerity programme. As it is, the resources available have declined year on year. Secondly I know that many council tax payers continue to face considerable hardship in the current economic climate and for them it is important not to see a large increase in the precept. The challenge for me along with the chief constable, throughout my term, has been trying to sustain the level of service the public gets and meet the needs of local communities, whilst making necessary efficiencies and savings, and making necessary changes to modernise policing. It has been a real challenge, but I am proud of the work that has been done, and will leave office very confident in the foundations that have been laid.

Strategy and investment

One of the most crucial considerations during my time in office took place in the first week when I sat down to fully review and understand the proposals put forward to develop an alliance between West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police. It soon became clear to me that the proposals set out in the alliance blueprint could help both forces achieve the (then) £30.3m cost savings required across both forces, while continuing to deliver the best possible police service to communities across West Mercia and Warwickshire and I put my support fully behind it.

Since that time the alliance with Warwickshire Police has continued to strengthen and develop. It has been very pleasing to see the breadth of work undertaken recognised nationally by government and other police forces, and at my request has been subject to independent scrutiny by the Police Foundation in 2014 who proclaimed the alliance should be “trumpeted as a model for others to follow”. This level of collaboration between two forces is unprecedented, and continues to provide the example that other forces look to. Inevitably governance of the alliance hasn’t been straight forward at times, and there have been elements of ‘give and take’, but delivering the best possible service for the public has always been the overwhelming priority.

In 2013 a new operational police estate strategy was implemented, as part of the force’s new approach to delivering services. It involved the force being less reliant on buildings and having fewer deployment bases, but better equipping officers to be out and about within the community and focusing resources on areas of highest demand. I reviewed the force’s estates when I came to office, and it seemed clear that although the force had evolved over time, its estates had not kept pace. It was not possible to justify the costs involved in running and maintaining some of the sites, which were simply either not fit for purpose anymore or were surplus to requirements. The new strategy included the disposal of a number of police stations and other sites, with the intention that it would save around £1.5m each year. I closely scrutinised these plans, and ensured plans were in place to retain a visible policing presence in every area where police stations were to close. Often this has been in the form of a new community policing post, which have been based in the heart of local towns and villages, within the likes of shops, libraries or council offices. This approach has allowed the force to achieve significant savings, whilst maintaining a visible police presence within communities. Other innovative approaches



PCC Bill Longmore joined by senior officers from West Mercia Police and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service at the new joint fire and police station in Bromsgrove

have been used in order to make the estates portfolio more efficient. For example, we have explored options to co-locate with our local fire services. This has been seen as a big success in Bromsgrove in particular, and options for similar arrangements elsewhere are being investigated. Recently we have also confirmed sharing the site at Droitwich with a suitable partner, which will save the force £30,000 a year, and justifies retaining the police station site there. Overall this strategy has generated almost £4.5m in capital savings and over £1m reduction in running costs, during my term of office, whilst maintaining police presence in our local communities. A number of other similar plans will follow, all of which will help reinforce police presence in local communities and help improve neighbourhood policing.

Aside from police stations, a lot of work has been undertaken to ensure the force’s estates are up to date and fit for purpose. I have approved changes and invested in changes to the firearms training facility, and backed a new operational command and control centre as part of wider modernisation and IT changes.

As well as bricks and mortar, it has been important to look at the force’s IT infrastructure, which is a substantial part of the modernisation programme. I have approved spend totalling tens of millions of pounds to make necessary upgrades to police equipment, as the current systems in place are simply no longer efficient or effective enough compared to the alternatives. A whole new IT infrastructure has been approved

for the force, including a new network, desktops and better mobility.

A significant part of this new IT infrastructure will be the Athena programme. It is a multi-million pound investment, which will enable much improved management of the information police use. It covers everything from case management to custody records within a single system, and has the capability to save huge amounts of police time. It also connects to other similar systems within other forces, and so will allow information to be shared much more efficiently. This system should be operational later in 2016.



As previously mentioned, myself and my Warwickshire counterpart Ron Ball have also approved plans for new operational command and control centres based on two sites, one in each force area. The new centres will replace aging systems with brand new state of the art technology. This will ensure better co-ordination for resources, as well as making it easier for people to contact the police, and get better results when they do so.

As well as providing additional resources in some more specialist areas I have remained committed to maintaining the number of frontline officers throughout the recent changes. I was delighted when in 2014 the force was able to open up recruitment again, making West Mercia one of only a handful of forces which have been actively recruiting in the last 18 months. I set out a target to get the force back up to what I considered to be full strength, and asked the force to ensure that was carried out. There was a period when I was concerned that recruitment was happening too slowly, and satisfactory progress was not being made, but that situation was addressed. During 2014/15 over 130 student officers were recruited in West Mercia, and during my term of

office we have actually increased the number of officers by 74 (not including student officers), which again is almost unique nationwide. In 2015 West Mercia saw an 8.9% increase in officer numbers, the highest percentage rise in England and Wales, at a time when most forces nationwide were actually seeing continued reductions.

In particular I give credit to the officers and staff who have recently been recognised at a national level for their work to attract more black and minority ethnic members of our community into policing. Our force needs to be a reflection of the communities we serve, and some good progress has been made in improving that.

I have championed greater use of Special Constables and more opportunities for other volunteers within the force throughout my term of office, and set the force the challenge of increasing those numbers. Issues were identified during my term around how long it took to train Special Constables and retention. We have recently seen a new and much more streamlined model introduced for the recruitment and training of Special Constables, which I hope will prove of real benefit to the force in the future. Where previously it had taken up to a year to fully train a new Special, as of November 2015 that process has now been reduced to three months. Two designated Special Constable recruitment officers have been recruited specifically for West Mercia, and I have been very keen to see more Specials recruited who are not looking to become full police officers in the future, therefore improving retention rates. I am also keen for the force to focus recruitment in small towns and villages. Local people wanting to serve their own local community could have a real impact in these areas as Special Constables. Although the number of Special Constables has remained fairly consistent throughout my term of office, I am confident that the actions that have been taken to address the issues identified will lead to significant improvements all round.

Aside from Special Constables, a host of new role profiles have also been produced for new volunteering positions within the police force. These include roles involving CCTV and work with Safer Neighbourhood Teams. I have also supported more community speedwatch volunteer groups across West Mercia.

It has been clear to me that policing was, and continues to be, in need of significant modernisation nationwide. Forces are tasked with tackling new and different challenges, and have to adapt to new ways of working – particularly when resources have been undoubtedly stretched. West Mercia is no different, and I have supported efforts to transform elements of the force, whilst maintaining the fundamentals of good policing. I have overseen the delivery of a new document, which formally sets out the vision of necessary progress and goals for the force to achieve by 2020.

Naturally the world will continue to change between now and 2020, but I believe this vision will help the force retain its focus throughout what will inevitably be a challenging period in the coming years.

To help the force to make the necessary fundamental changes to how it operates, I have also approved the idea of involving a transformation partner. I strongly believe that police officers and staff should still be central to how the force evolves, but the chance to supplement that knowledge with external expertise represents a potentially very good opportunity. These plans will all develop long beyond my term of office, and I look forward to seeing how they evolve in the coming years.

Local policing

In September 2013 a new policing model was introduced across the alliance. In West Mercia this saw the introduction of 82 safer neighbourhood teams, supported by teams of response and specialist police officers, police staff and special constables and I was immensely proud of the level of commitment and professionalism shown by officers, staff and volunteers during this period of immense change. Rightfully, the model has been reviewed and tweaked where appropriate, but overall I feel the new structure is serving the public well.

Two areas in West Mercia have led the way in a groundbreaking partnership project between police, PCCs and other local agencies. The concept of Integrated Community Management was trialled in Worcester and Shrewsbury, bringing together emergency services, local businesses, voluntary and community groups and education providers amongst others.

Although the organisations enjoyed good relationships already, the arrangement built on that, shifting their collaboration from an issue-by-issue basis, to a vehicle for mutually agreed priorities. The idea has led to better uses of information, time and resources, and new work to tackle anti-social behaviour. The scheme in Shrewsbury has been a particular success, attracting attention from the Home Office at a national level.



Public and partner engagement event, Pitchcroft, Worcester 2014.

I have no doubt that there will be further necessary changes to the policing model as the nature of policing in the 21st century evolves. Just during my term in office the increase in crimes related to child sexual exploitation and cyber crime both locally and nationally has been astonishing.

Fortunately I have been able to direct additional resources to address some of these increasing demand areas. In conjunction with Warwickshire's PCC, we released an extra £2.6m of funding to the alliance in order to increase resources and capability around child sexual exploitation. This includes provision for an additional 27 officers working to protect vulnerable people across Warwickshire and West Mercia. I have also agreed multi-million pound IT infrastructure changes across the force, which will undoubtedly help increase efficiency significantly and make the job much simpler for officers in the future. These are only single steps on a journey, however, that must and undoubtedly will continue in the future, to modernise policing and ensure it can meet changing demands. However, I strongly believe that the basics of good policing always remain the same. For example, neighbourhood policing is something I have defended and worked hard to maintain as much as possible. It is another area where things have to evolve, and can be improved, but for me it is a fundamental requirement that police officers and forces should have strong connections to the communities they serve.

It is a clear part of the PCC's role to hold the Chief Constable to account, and there have been a number of occasions where I have challenged the way the force has operated. I feel very fortunate to have worked with an excellent Chief Constable in David Shaw, who clearly understood the nature of this specific element of my role, and has been accessible, honest and helpful throughout my term in office. For my part, I have always tried to be fair, respectful and constructive in the issues I've raised, and I think that approach has served both of us, as well as the people of West Mercia, very well. I made it clear from the outset that I would closely monitor the impact of the estate programme which resulted in the closure of a number of police stations, as well as changing the use of other police buildings. I have continued to press for alternatives or shared use of police buildings to ensure that local policing presence can be maintained, and the results of that are clear to see with new community policing posts and shared buildings dotted across West Mercia. It is also pleasing to see that community concerns have been listened to and as a result of me asking the chief constable to review patrol areas, in February 2015 police patrol bases were reinstated in Malvern and Ross on Wye, and in January 2016 a patrol base also returned to Ludlow.



Partnerships

Throughout my term of office I have strongly stressed the benefits of partnership working, and sought out opportunities wherever possible. Being efficient and ensuring best value for money is a responsibility at any time, but with the financial constraints we have seen in recent years right across the whole of the public sector, the opportunity for collaboration has never been better. Early in 2015 I approved a full business case for Place Partnership Ltd. This is an example of a ground breaking public sector initiative which brings together six founding partner organisations (West Mercia Police, Warwickshire Police, Worcestershire County Council, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Worcester City Council and Redditch Borough Council) to form a public sector asset management company – something never seen before in the UK. The company is now working to deliver significant economic and regeneration benefits by maximising the value of our combined estates portfolio, which includes 1,323 assets across four counties.

Conclusion

We have had 11 force-specific reports from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary since November 2012, examining the performance of West Mercia Police. Overall, I have been pleased with the findings and conclusions from the inspections, which have been generally in line with, or slightly better than national averages. Crucially, they have helped reaffirm that, broadly speaking, the force has in recent years maintained levels of performance and service to the public, whilst finding tens of millions of pounds in efficiency savings, and undergoing the biggest organisational changes it has ever seen. Those achievements should not be under-estimated, and I am very grateful to the officers, staff and volunteers whose hard work has made that the case.

Crime

Overview

The make up of crime is changing and even within the time I have been in office, cyber related crime and child sexual exploitation are two issues which have seen increased reporting and become much more of a focus within policing and the wider society. Issues around child protection have very much been brought into focus following Operation Yewtree and as previously mentioned, I agreed to increase resources in order to meet this demand.

Crime prevention

I believe that a focus on crime prevention is essential. We know that stopping crimes from happening in the first place is far more cost-effective than dealing with offences when they do occur. This has been a priority for me, particularly at a time when resources have been diminished. It is also important that areas of high demand are identified so that resources can be directed more efficiently. During my time in office this approach has included investing in new IT solutions to free up officer time to enable them to spend more time out in their communities and increase the visibility of policing; signing up to Athena, a police collaboration IT system, and securing funding from the Police Innovation Fund to develop a new joint Operations and Communications Centre

(OCC) with Warwickshire Police and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, based across two sites - one being in West Mercia. During 2015/16 I have allocated £30k per local policing area within West Mercia specifically to promote innovation in reducing crime and preventing harm. Numerous grants have also been made to third sector organisations for projects designed to prevent crime, which will be discussed later in this document.

Cyber crime

Cyber crime is a fast growing area and by its very nature, is a challenge for police locally, nationally and internationally. In 2013, 36 million adults (73 percent) in Great Britain accessed the internet every day, 20 million more than in 2006 when directly comparable records began. The percentage of people who use a mobile phone to access the internet has more than doubled between 2010 and 2013, from 24 percent to 53 percent. Mobile internet traffic is projected by Intel to increase 13 times by 2017.

PCC visit to Westacre School, Droitwich, to discuss a cyber-safety project with pupils





Left to right, clockwise: Community groups attend the Rural and Business Crime Conference in Shrewsbury, January 2015. Deputy PCC Barrie Sheldon with Supt Sue Thomas, policing commander for Herefordshire and alliance lead on rural and business crime. Deputy PCC Barrie Sheldon attends a rural security event in Shifnal

My Deputy, Barrie Sheldon has taken a lead on cyber crime and has been part of a governance group looking to develop an approach across the alliance. The force has recently published a draft cyber crime strategy which moving forward will provide the foundation for the alliance approach to tackling cyber crime. Over the last two years we have already seen specific innovations relating to cyber crime, including targeted campaigns designed to prevent people becoming victims, and a new cyber crime van, which has taken safety messages and helpful information directly into communities around West Mercia.

Supporting rural and business communities

In September 2013 I hosted two workshops which brought together a range of key organisations, groups and individuals with an interest in rural or business affairs to help inform the development of rural and business crime strategies for the police.

Since that time I have pledged to commit £1m per annum towards initiatives which target rural, business and cyber crime, and have agreement from the five Community Safety Partnerships within West Mercia for them to lead on rural and business crime initiatives with their local policing Superintendent.

To ensure a coordinated approach to rural and business crime within the forces, one Superintendent has been given an overall alliance-wide lead on rural and business crime. The Alliance approach to rural crime has been branded 'Rural Matters' with six key work areas in support of the rural crime strategy. A 'rural matters' brand approach to business crime is in development. Seven key work areas have been identified in support of the business crime strategy

Both PCCs have in conjunction set up a single alliance-wide rural and business crime governance board to oversee the strategic delivery of the alliance rural and business crime strategies, including providing advice to enable me to make funding decisions. Examples of projects / initiatives:

- **Operation Leviathan** – this is a fisheries enforcement campaign involving 15 police forces, and West Mercia are the lead force. The operation tackles illegal fishing and conducts anti poaching patrols. Other partners include the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust. Local action has included briefing the control room staff, working with the Crown Prosecution Service on rod licence evasion, and rolling out SmartWater through angling clubs. Feedback from the angling community has been very positive.

- **Operation Nightingale** – this is a cross border initiative in Herefordshire to target rural crime and poaching. Approximately 20 officers made up from cross border police forces are involved. Officers in Herefordshire have been working with local gamekeepers, landowners and farmers to ensure that any suspicious activity is dealt with. There has been positive feedback from local communities.
- **Wildlife Crime** - the Alliance does not have a dedicated wildlife crime unit, but has recently supported targeted training to a number of officers to increase resilience, and there are now 7 trained officers in West Mercia. In addition the National Wildlife Crime Unit has undertaken a pilot in Herefordshire to provide 100 officers with awareness training.
- **Operation Vulture** – is an example of a cross border targeted operation to combat rural crime and burglaries through the disruption of criminal activity. It involved Safer Neighbourhood Teams in North Shropshire and Oswestry along with North Wales, Cheshire and Dyfed Powys Police. Over two nights 108 vehicles were checked.
- **Facewatch** – the force has supported the launch of Facewatch in Hereford and Malvern. Facewatch is a community led initiative that allows businesses to share information on possible troublemakers and low level criminals in quick time with other users in their Facewatch group and the police. The web based system allows businesses to upload still photos and videos onto the database, to record crime reports and write statements. The first success in Malvern was a shoplifter who admitted to 20 offences in court.
- **Mobile Police Stations** - these have been introduced and rotated between small villages to ensure a regular police presence, and the opportunity for residents to talk to an officer about any issues they have.
- **We Don't Buy Crime** – an initiative has been launched to reduce the market for stolen goods by working with local businesses to tackle the illicit trade of stolen property, and make the legitimate trading of second hand property safer. As part of this, working with SmartWater the force has created the UK's first second hand goods trader database, where every trader in second hand goods is encouraged to sign up to adopt best practice in the retail of such goods and commits to work with local police to tackle crime. This initiative also involves working with towns and villages. For example, with funding from Cleobury Mortimer Parish Council, South Shropshire Housing Association and the PCC, a joint initiative between the Police, Council and SmartWater has meant that over 1,150 houses (85%) have been given SmartWater kits to mark their valuables.

Partnership working

As has already been mentioned, I set out in my Police and Crime Plan the importance I place on partnership working as I firmly believe that tackling crime and disorder and making communities feel safe is not just a policing responsibility. Throughout my term I have worked hard to develop and strengthen relationships with those partners that operate within West Mercia and beyond, Working together wherever possible to maximise resources has become increasingly important as the impact of government spending cuts has meant that public sector organisations have had to review and rationalise the services they provide.

In April 2013 the grant funding previously provided by the Home Office to the five Community Safety Partnerships within West Mercia passed to me and was no longer ring fenced for that purpose. However, valuing the work of the partnerships, I have always maintained an equivalent level of support and they now form an integral part of the approach I have developed.



Left, Deputy PCC Barrie Sheldon meets Ruth Jones OBE, Director of the National Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence and Abuse at Worcester University. Right, PCC Bill Longmore joins Telford & Wrekin's events as part of the White Ribbon campaign against domestic violence.

In 2014 I asked the force to add to their existing work and partnerships, by forging closer ties with the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV) – which helps women and men who suffer abuse at home, regardless of their financial situation, by getting fast and free (to the victim) injunctions against their partners. That work is now well underway, and is showing notable success.

I have recently sought a review of the governance arrangements of the West Mercia Safer Roads Partnership. I am keen to ensure that the partnership is operating in an open and transparent way, and is not only reflecting the concerns of communities but is responding to them as well.

I believe that there are still opportunities to strengthen my engagement with the Health and Wellbeing Boards that operate within West Mercia particularly as some of their strategic priorities are strongly aligned to the force's vision of protecting people from harm. I have always maintained that prevention is better than a cure – not only for crime and anti-social behaviour, but for health as well, and the two are often related.

Reducing Reoffending

As Commissioner, one of my key focuses has been on reducing reoffending, which I feel is an area where clear improvements can be made nationwide. Statistics show that prison sentences alone aren't effective enough at rehabilitation and preventing reoffending. With the average annual cost per prison place at £36,237, and knowing that 45% of all adult offenders are reconvicted within 12 months (rising to 58% for offenders sentenced to less than 12 months) we currently have a situation where reoffending across England and Wales is estimated to cost up to £13bn each year. For me, that situation is unacceptable, and I have worked hard to find new, innovative and more effective ways of reducing that burden on society from every perspective.

Reducing reoffending effectively reduces crime. That means fewer victims of crime, and reduces the strain on policing. It is a scenario that clearly benefits everyone.

I have done a lot of work to build up relationships with local prisons during my term. I have always felt that as a society, we have not done enough with or got enough out of prisons, and this is something I was keen to change. Working with the prisons, I worked to create a new company – Inside Products Ltd – designed to make better use of the excellent workshop facilities within prisons, and sell the products made to the public. The intention is to create more and better rehabilitation and retraining



Inside Products

"Offenders Making Good"

PCC Bill Longmore (left), and Inside Products Business Development Manager Martin Brennan (centre) meet the Prisons Minister Andrew Selous MP at an event in Worcester, to discuss the Inside Products initiative.

opportunities for offenders. Any profits will go back into rehabilitation. The project has attracted national attention, and could represent a massive step forward. I have to admit that it has proven frustrating trying to realise the full potential of the company for various reasons, not least because of the complexities of dealing so closely with the prisons. They have their own unique cultures, rules and working practices which are (out of necessity) quite far removed from conventional business practices.

Aside from the Inside Products company, there have been numerous other projects with the prisons, again, all of which have been aimed at improving rehabilitation and retraining opportunities for offenders, and giving them tangible ways to stay away from crime upon their release from prison.

During my tenure I have worked closely with the West Mercia Probation Trust, the police, the Community Rehabilitation Company, the West Mercia Youth Offending Service, the Prison Service and third sector companies to understand and support the needs of offenders. I have provided both financial and political support to partners to ensure a clear focus on reducing crime by tackling reoffending.

One of the most successful programmes of work I commissioned was related to supporting offenders who were sentenced to a prison sentence of 12 months or less. Working closely with the Probation Trust, YSS and Willowdene care farm, we supported offenders on short term residential courses designed to address their offending behaviour. An independent audit of that scheme demonstrated that for every £1 I had invested in the scheme, it saved the tax payer £16 in associated costs.

I arranged a partnership project between HMP Stoke Heath and Hawk Group Ltd, to train offenders to operate plant machinery. It is an industry where there are many jobs and opportunities, and the arrangement is now being supported by many other PCCs nationwide. So far, 100% of those involved have had an offer of employment, thus helping keep them away from reoffending in the future.

In addition to the above successes I would like to highlight my work to support the development of Integrated Offender Management (IOM). Over the past four years I've made a significant contribution to IOM, both financially and politically. IOM is a partnership approach designed to work with and support the most prolific and difficult offenders in our communities.

The scheme is designed to identify the needs of offenders and bring partners together to deliver specified intervention programmes, designed to address offending behaviour with the aim of breaking the cycle of offending for good. Given the significant advancements made in IOM during my tenure, it is my hope that IOM will form part of my legacy of improved partnership across West Mercia.

While we've had some great successes in reducing reoffending, I feel the need to highlight some things that may not have gone to plan. During my tenure the Government introduced its Transforming Rehabilitation programme which saw the Ministry of Justice decommission Probation Trusts, introducing the National Probation Service along with 21 new Community Rehabilitation Companies in its place. The Government had hoped that the programme would inject innovation and new ways of working into the rehabilitation of offenders. While I can appreciate what the Government was seeking to achieve, it did cause the loss of a very innovative and high performing Probation Trust in West Mercia. The programme is still in its early days, so it is too early to tell just how successful the Government's programme will be. Warwickshire and West Mercia formed one of the new contract package areas, and the contract was awarded to EOS+ which is part of the StaffLine Group, plc. Through a lot of hard work and goodwill from the staff, previous levels of excellent performance (judged against Ministry of Justice statistics, and community performance reports), have been maintained thus far.

Given the changes in staff, processes and systems, I was pleased to see that the proven reoffending statistics have remained relatively static with a very small increase being reported between Dec 2012 to Dec 2014. Locally the processes have stabilised and both the Community Rehabilitation Company and National Probation Service are recruiting staff to fill current vacancies. It is my hope that when the next set of data is published by the MoJ we will see reoffending at or below 2012 levels.

I would urge the next PCC to continue to challenge partners to do more when it comes to reducing reoffending as every crime prevented means there is one less victim of crime.



Restorative justice cricket event at HMP Hewell Grange, involving police officers, prisoners, and victims of crime.

Criminal Justice System

The 2011 Police and Social Responsibility Act requires me to make arrangements for an efficient and effective Criminal Justice System (CJS). The arrangements that I put into place involve working with the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, and bring together chief officers of the Criminal Justice System with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CJS. As PCC, I was invited to sit on the Board and my Deputy Barrie Sheldon has served as the Vice Chair.

West Mercia's Criminal Justice Board is focused on three principle aims:

- Improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the CJS
- Work in partnership to reduce crime and bring offenders to justice
- Ensure that victims are at the heart of the CJS

In addition to the above, the board is responsible for ensuring that key Government programmes are delivered.

During my tenure, the Criminal Justice Board successfully oversaw the delivery of:

- Transforming Summary Justice, which was a 10 point improvement programme designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Magistrates' Courts.
- Improvements to video technology, which saw 5 new video suites commissioned across West Mercia.
- Improvements to digital working and processing of criminal files across the CJS.
- "Make a Plea" which is an online service where people can enter pleas to traffic offences online.
- Dedicated traffic courts

- Police led prosecutions
- Independent Scrutiny Panels for Out of Court Disposals
- The revised Victim's Code of Practice, and Witness Charter
- A Warwickshire and West Mercia Restorative Justice Strategy
- GPS tagging of offenders
- IOM
- Special Domestic Violence Courts

In addition to the work of the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, I asked my office to set up a new Crime Reduction Board, which has been chaired by the Deputy PCC. The Crime Reduction Board brings together all five Community Safety Partnerships and strategic leads for reducing reoffending and Integrated Offender Management with the aim of streamlining and improving governance and accountability. Moving forward, the Board will provide oversight of the Community Safety Commissioning Framework and Reducing Reoffending agendas.

In my time as PCC I have also been part of the introduction of West Mercia's Mental Health Crisis Concordat. This has been a substantial piece of work, bringing together a whole host of partners including local councils, medical experts, charities and police. The aim is to improve provision of care for people suffering with mental health crises, and ensure that all relevant partners are working together. The work has resulted in fewer patients being transferred to police cells as places of safety, and better awareness and response training for officers. I look forward to seeing the progress the Concordat continues to make in the future.



The inaugural meeting of the West Mercia Mental Health Crisis Concordat, Hindlip, 2014

I have also recently been working with NHS England to introduce a Liaison and Diversion (L&D) scheme within West Mercia. The L&D scheme will see mental health practitioners and commissioners working alongside the Criminal Justice System, intervening and supporting people with mental health issues with the aim of effectively meeting their needs so they do not formally end up within the justice system, having been arrested or charged with an offence.

To support a more effective Criminal Justice System, I have made a commitment to invest £10 million in upgrading West Mercia Police's ICT systems. This is a multi-year, multi-million pound investment which will transform the way the Police are able to work in the future. It is envisaged that the investment will improve the Police's efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

In addition to investing in the Police's ICT, I have made a commitment to streamline and invest in our forensic services, as there is a widespread acknowledgement that an update is required. The investment will see an increase in capability and capacity to process evidence, leading to an improved service for victims and witnesses, and should also help bring offenders to justice quicker.

Outcomes

In 2013 the Home Office began to move away from measuring solved crimes or 'sanction detections' and instead introduced a much broader framework for crime outcomes. The framework was fully introduced in 2014 and gives a more rounded picture of the results of investigations into reported crimes, which is especially important for example in a domestic violence incident where the victim may not want to press charges, but the crime has still been investigated to a conclusion. The first full year of national data was 2014/15 and this shows that:

- Nationally 93% of offences were assigned an outcome compared to 91% in West Mercia.
- Nationally 49% of offences saw the investigation complete with no suspect identified, compared to 47% in West Mercia
- West Mercia was in line with the national average of 25% regarding the number of 'traditional' disposals.

Looking at outcomes in this way is a significant change and now forms part of the regular performance monitoring and reporting.

Measuring performance

The Police and Crime Plan for West Mercia, as originally published, contained a range of performance measures developed with the Chief Constable that enabled me to monitor the performance of West Mercia Police and how my objectives were being implemented. From April 2014 I chose to remove all targets and measures from the plan. This was in response to national concerns on both the validity of crime data and the potential for target driven policing to skew performance. I have however, continued to carefully monitor police performance in other ways since then. As well as regular meetings with service heads I have a regular focus on performance at my weekly meeting with the Chief Constable and my office has been working to develop a public facing performance report which I now publish on my website. I also value the feedback I receive from communities on different local concerns or policing issues. This helps me ensure that the force is providing an effective and efficient service to the public.

Grants and commissioning

Both grant giving and strategic commissioning have proven critical in promoting crime prevention and providing support to victims of crime over the last four years across West Mercia.

Since being elected, my specific role and responsibilities have evolved, along with other PCCs around England and Wales. The remit of my investments has equally evolved to meet the demands of policing, supporting victims and enhancing the Criminal Justice System where I can.

As a result to changes in the way police forces nationwide now record offences, there has been a significant increase in the amount of recorded crime. More people are also feeling empowered and able to report crime as well though now. This is a huge success and something I am very proud of. To take victims who previously suffered in silence, and now give them the outlets and confidence to come forward marks real positive progress.

Coupled with this, I have taken very seriously the statutory duty I have had to ensure the Victims Code is fully upheld across West Mercia.

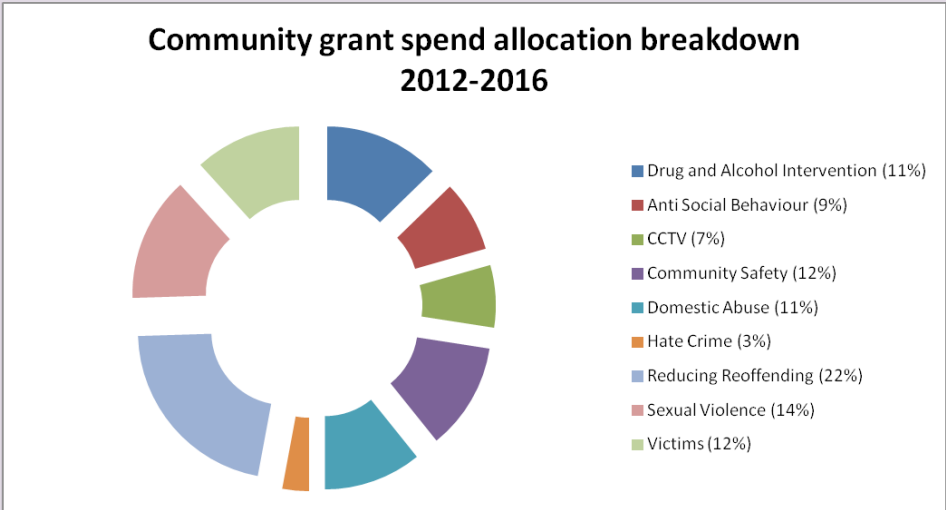
This in turn has led to an increase in the support requirements for victims of crime. The amount of money spent on supporting victims and programmes to reduce crime have increased significantly to meet this demand as well.



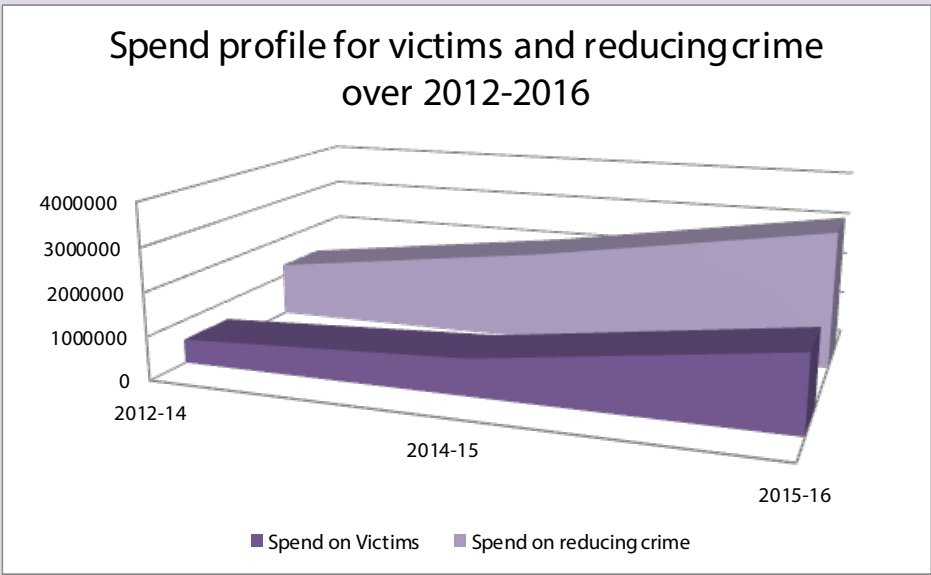
During my term as Police and Crime Commissioner, I have approved in excess of £7m of grants, paid directly to frontline and grass roots voluntary and community sector organisations, for them to deliver projects and initiatives which help deliver my Police and Crime Plan objectives.

Each investment has been approved following the scrutiny of robust business cases which clearly set out the success criteria (intended outcomes, milestones, risks etc). Again, I am very proud of the impact our investment has made in our communities over my tenure. I have seen many of these projects first hand, along with my Deputy over my term and have seen many successes – for the victim, in rehabilitating offenders, and preventing crime.

The allocation of this £7m can be shown below:



(* The additional support for victims does not include initiatives which have been commissioned from April 2015.)



In 2015 I launched and prioritised an additional £1m into Business, Rural and Cyber-crime; alongside £1.3m of Ministry of Justice money specifically ring fenced for enabling victims of crime to cope and recover.

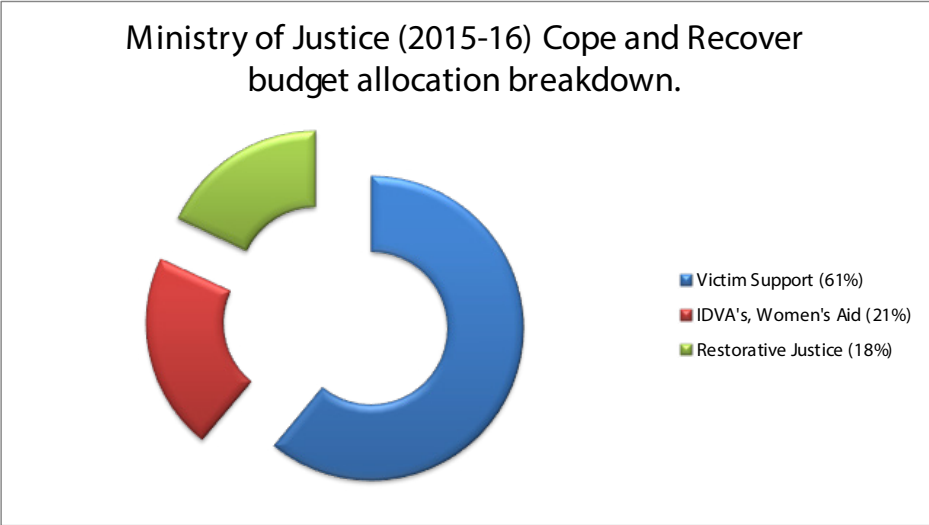
Over the course of 2015 we also allocated our additional precept funding for the year, all £1.5m of which has been dedicated to reducing demand on policing. This has been done collaboratively with the force, designing and implementing transformational change. Programmes are currently underway, and further strategic developments around Integrated Offender Management and increased funding for GPS tagging will evolve even during the final stages of my term of office.

The Ministry of Justice ring fenced funding for victims has been allocated as below. The Victim Support contract is entirely within this funding stream, and provides specialist support for up to 33,000 victims of crime each year – a considerable increase on the capacity we had previously. People have access to information, guidance and advice to help them to cope and recover. We collaborated with Warwickshire OPCC with this contract arrangement to ensure we gained maximum economy of scale; and as a consequence have ensured that there is no post code lottery of provision across the alliance policing area, something which was important to myself, and my Warwickshire counterpart Ron Ball.

I have continued to increase investment in Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) across my area. We initiated the country’s first collaborative arrangement with our four Local Authorities and managed to achieve a groundbreaking framework agreement. This saw our five individual funding pots brought together to ensure economies of scale, but also a consistency of service and provision across West Mercia. Women’s Aid deliver up to 13.5 IDVAs across West Mercia now, including in NHS and court settings. This level of IDVA coverage is a direct result of co-commissioning with each Local Authority.

Restorative Justice is an emerging picture within West Mercia now. We have arranged secondments into the police to develop the strategy for both the force and community remedies. The results of this will be available at the end of March 2016.

In addition to the breakdown of spending below, we have also subsidised the requirement for Independent Sexual Violence Advisors across the region. Our investment has increased by 35% in the last 12 months, which has looked to increase capacity, reduce caseloads and improve mobile working possibilities.





Left to right: Deputy PCC Barrie Sheldon visiting St Mary's RC Primary School in Evesham as part of the PCC's 'Stay Safe Be Aware' competition, Deputy PCC Barrie Sheldon meeting Will Lindesay from Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service, and members and staff from the South Wye Police Boxing Academy.

I have spent significant time, along with my Deputy Barrie Sheldon, meeting and speaking to our communities, stakeholders and policy makers to find out their opinions and thoughts. It has been vital to understand the needs of service users, either a victim or a perpetrator, and from this determine whether there are gaps in services and how well existing provision is working for them. We have used this feedback to help redesign our services and grants process in conjunction with our partners.

Grants and commissioning play a significant role in achieving my Police and Crime Plan objectives, and enable me to meet statutory requirements. However, much of what we need to do to deliver our priorities can only be achieved through working as part of multi agency partnerships, with organisations who share our commitment to improve community safety outcomes for victims, support interventions that prevent and reduce offending and deliver effective policing.

One of the areas where we have flourished as an office I believe is effective partnership working. Some of this I have already discussed, but specifically of late has involved each of the Local Authority strategic Community Safety Partnerships (CSP). 2015 has seen our partnership work take a step forward in the development of bespoke Commissioning Frameworks between agencies signed up to the CSP priorities. The frameworks provide the link between what we need to fund, what we fund, and whether our funding has made the required difference. This assessment used local and

regional crime data that will undoubtedly help the next PCC to provide more targeted support where the demand and harm is greater, making the alignment of funding to need as efficient as it can be. These Commissioning Frameworks will be in place for roll out in 2016. Again this is a first across the country, and my office has been asked to speak at a national conference to discuss this framework, where both senior policy leads from the Ministry of Justice and Department for Communities and Local Government were in attendance. I am proud to have led the way in our approach, and trust that it sets a solid foundation for the future, in what is a relatively new and developing area of work.

Commissioning and grant funding in today's climate of public sector austerity is challenging; especially across West Mercia as the partners and different commissioners who fund similar activity are spread widely. However we have been successful in delivering programmes of support across boundaries, and have worked closely with associated partners in doing this. However, we have also been able to do this whilst meeting the needs of each city, town or rural village. Partnership working has been essential in doing this, as well as planning as much as possible for provision that is needed and the market shaping that is required moving forward. I feel certain that as I prepare to leave office, the PCC's work with NHS England, Local Authorities and Public Health, in addition to the array of providers, will continue to develop and evolve provision as communities change.

Public engagement



In 2010, Home Secretary Theresa May's stance was that "for too long the police have become disconnected from the communities they serve". The legislation that followed, introducing Police and Crime Commissioners, made it clear that better and increased public engagement would be a major part of the role.

It is an element of my role that I have taken very seriously. I strongly believe that you cannot represent the public and present an authoritative 'voice for the people', if you don't know what they think, or what they want.

For me, the value of public engagement became clear before I had even been elected. During my campaign, countless people sent letters, wrote emails, made calls or came to hustings, telling me what their priorities were. It was those engagements that really brought the issues of rural, business and cyber crime to the fore, as subjects that needed additional focus. Public engagement around those three areas has continued during my term in office, with a series of local conferences, community forums,

input into new strategy documents, and the introduction of a new Rural and Business Crime Board. The new group has helped set strategic directions and initiatives for West Mercia, with direct input from organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the National Farmers' Union. On top of this, there have been countless times we have had face-to-face meetings and feedback from the public, whether that was at a rural security event in Shifnal, or a community forum in Eywas Harold.

When I came into office, I set out my plans for community engagement in a strategy document, which was formed with public input, and has guided me throughout my term. It includes a vision "for a new community spirit with people working together in partnership to improve society and to reduce crime and disorder". That sort of change doesn't necessarily happen overnight, but I have seen first-hand the differences we have been able to make, because of better public engagement. My engagement has been continually monitored on a quarterly basis to make sure that not only was I meeting

my statutory responsibilities, but we were reaching as many people as possible, across every demographic.

The amount of public correspondence received in my office has increased twenty-fold compared to the old Police Authority. Around 500 items a year from the public now arrive into the office, and I can say with confidence that every letter and email was logged, and received a proper response. Often that came from myself or my Deputy, or alternatively from another appropriate person. Where written correspondence wasn't appropriate, we made personal phone calls, and where necessary, we also arranged one-to-one meetings with people.

For numerous reasons, it hasn't always been possible to resolve issues for people as they wanted, but I wanted to make sure that each person got a full, fair and individual response, and of course I tried to provide answers and resolutions to their comments as often as I possibly could. Social media has also been a growth area where we have engaged with the public as much as possible. Whether that has been answering questions on the future of policing, or telling people how to report a crime, we have tried to have a real conversation with people.

Effectively engaging with people across the 4th

biggest policing area in England and Wales has been something of a logistical challenge. It was with that in mind that I brought in the Community Ambassador scheme. One ambassador was appointed for each local policing area, allowing me to further extend my 'eyes and ears' within our communities. The ambassadors have provided invaluable feedback on a weekly basis from a range of different visits across the West Mercia area. They have met with grant recipients, councillors, charities, sports clubs, voluntary groups, religious leaders, school groups and business owners to name just a few. The notes from their meetings were fed back into the office for my information, and have been incredibly useful in flagging up local issues or highlighting where projects are working particularly well. I am very grateful for their contributions over the last few years.

Throughout my time in office, I have also administered an Independent Custody Visitor scheme across West Mercia. These volunteers help fulfil a crucial role in ensuring public confidence in the police, by inspecting custody suites and the treatment of people who have been detained. I am incredibly grateful for the dedication and hard work of all the people who have served in this role – some of whom have been doing the job for over 30 years.



We have been part of or organised a wide range of events or public meetings over the last few years. On a weekly basis we have met people right across West Mercia in town centres, sports events, schools, local shops, flower shows, charity events, community groups, older peoples' forums, youth clubs and places of worship among many others. I was keen to bring people closer to the police service and vice versa, and a number of events have had that as a real focus. For example, hundreds of people attended rural and business crime conferences we held in conjunction with the force across each policing area. Those were followed by launch events for relevant strategies, which were equally well attended by key stakeholders and the public. We also saw a number of police open days across the force area in 2014 which were a big success. Huge numbers of people turned out to meet officers and learn more about every aspect of policing.



FORWARD TOGETHER SHOWCASE

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Finally, we staged a major public event in summer 2015 in Shrewsbury, aimed at bringing partners together from across different sectors and inspiring people to make positive changes for themselves and their communities. The Forward Together Showcase eventually brought together more than 60 partner organisations, all of which are involved in making West Mercia a better, safer, healthier place. We have recently seen the end of one of my biggest engagement projects – working with schools across West Mercia to deliver key information about crime and safety to thousands of pupils. The buy-in we had from schools was tremendous, getting students of all ages to design either posters or mobile apps to help keep young people safe.

A lot of this work has naturally involved the police force as well, and I have been very pleased to see PCC-driven changes and improvements

being made within specific areas of police business, involving the public. For example, the much-improved recruitment process the force has now implemented for Special Constables, and the expanded range of volunteering opportunities. For me, perhaps the best example of progress here has been the Police Cadets scheme. When I came to office I saw the success the programme had been in Telford and Wrekin and provided funding to extend that across the rest of the West Mercia area. The results have been truly superb.

The young people involved have learnt leadership, team work, discipline, and other important life lessons – all in a fun environment that I know they have really enjoyed. We now have over 100 cadets in total enrolled in the two year programme, and to see the results of it is heart-warming. These are young people who are

going on to university studies, careers in public service, and indeed quite a few have become full police officers. It is clearly a scheme that is helping give teenagers a fantastic start in adult life. I am very pleased to learn as well that a Junior Cadets programme is to be rolled out across West Mercia as well now, following a successful trial in north Shropshire.

I have run 15 official 'consultations' in my time as Commissioner, including an annual one on the budget and police precept, along with others including business crime, rural crime, hate crime and domestic abuse.



Office of the PCC

My office has evolved significantly throughout my time in office, to meet the specific needs and demands we have faced. As I prepare to finish my term, it is quite different to the set-up inherited from the previous Police Authority, and I have no doubt it will continue to adapt as time goes on.

In total, my office now has 17 members of staff (two of which are shared with the Warwickshire OPCC). Commissioning has probably been the area within the office with the biggest visible change. The PCC role has brought new responsibilities for providing services for victims of crime, and specific services around domestic abuse and sexual violence, and so I have ensured we have a small team capable of delivering the best possible services and value for money for West Mercia.

When Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced, they came with a goal of costing less than the outgoing Police Authorities. I am very pleased to say that we have achieved that every year. In its final operating year, the Police Authority cost in West Mercia was £1.5m. In spite of inflation and the extra responsibilities given to PCCs, my final year operating costs will total £1.3m.

In Conclusion

Police forces everywhere are undoubtedly facing major and continuous changes. Society, technology and crime are all evolving rapidly and will continue to do so. It is impossible to know precisely what the future has in store, so it is vital that we make sure our police services are agile, dynamic, adaptable, well run and have the necessary skills and resources to respond effectively to whatever challenges come their way.

Everything during my term of office has been geared towards creating a better society and providing the people of West Mercia the best possible police service in the present, as well as in the future. I am confident that what we have achieved has set a solid foundation for the years to come, but that work needs to be built on in order to realise its full potential. The police will need stability, continuity and effective leadership to ensure that good work does not go to waste. An important part of that, I feel, is making sure that policing at both a national and local level does not become a political football. I strongly believe that whenever policing gets mixed up with politics, the public suffers. At an individual level, I'm sure some people have honourable intentions, but political parties will always serve their own interests first, and their pursuit of power and control only distracts them from the issues that really matter to the people they serve.

When I became Commissioner I set out a vision for what I hoped to accomplish, and I am proud that we have achieved each of my original goals. I feel that the police have truly re-connected to the communities they serve in West Mercia, and those links need to be strengthened even further in the future. Changes in society will dictate that issues such as isolation among older people, or dis-engaged youngsters will become more common, and the police will need different approaches and skills to help address them effectively. Officers need to be good communicators, engaging, understanding and even compassionate if they are to truly be a force for good for everyone.

The police will always have a central role to play in trying to improve communities and keep people safe. However, no police force can realise its full potential if it is simply a fringe organisation which only ever comes into contact with the minority who break the law. The police have to work with partners and the wider public in a real collaborative effort because real success means they don't just police society, they have to be a part of it as well.

Bill Longmore

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

March 2016