

Warwickshire Police Authority – 24 September 2008

General Report of the Chief Constable

Recommendation

The Authority is recommended to note the contents of this report.

1 HMIC Recognises Improvements in Performance

The force has made significant improvements across key areas of service delivery according to the results of recent inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC).

The HMIC conducted independent inspections of the force, looking in detail at arrangements for investigating major crime, delivering neighbourhood policing, developing more citizen-focussed services and tackling serious and organised crime.

The force is now recognised as 'meeting the standard' in all areas inspected. These findings come only two years after the force was assessed as 'poor' in a number of key areas and is an independent recognition of the investment made by Warwickshire Police and the Police Authority in protecting people from harm.

The full report for Major Crime was published on 22 July 2008, and the Neighbourhood Policing and Citizen Focus reports on 16 September 2008.

The recent Green Paper on policing – *From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together* - proposes major changes to the role of HMIC. Although the HMIC will continue to conduct inspection activity, the force has been informed that there is no planned inspection activity in Warwickshire in the near future.

The Chief Constable has already expressed his thanks to all members of the force and volunteers for their skill and commitment in driving up performance. He has also thanked members of the Authority for their support, which enabled the service to invest and deliver better services.

2. Sex Offender Disclosure Pilot

New arrangements to give parents, carers or guardians of children and young people in Warwickshire the opportunity to seek information about individuals who have significant access to their children are being piloted from this month.

The pilot aims to empower parents, carers and guardians by giving them a more formal and visible way of requesting information about people that are involved in their family life, specifically if they are concerned that a person is a child sexual offender.

Any member of the public can approach the police with concerns about a named individual and all concerns will be investigated. However, where it is considered necessary and

appropriate to release information, such disclosure will be made to the parent, carers or guardian directly - not to the third party who made the initial enquiry.

Information will only be disclosed when providing such information will increase protection for a child or young person.

The decision to disclose such information will be taken under Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) or safeguarding children procedures and builds upon existing processes to proactively manage Registered Sexual Offenders.

This pilot will see the police working closely with the Local Safeguarding Children Board, Children's Services at Warwickshire County Council, the Probation Service and MAPPA, as well as local and national child protection charities.

The 12-month pilot, co-ordinated by the Home Office, is also taking place in parts of Cambridgeshire, Cleveland and Hampshire and is called the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Pilot.

Warwickshire Police has launched a dedicated helpline for the scheme - 01926 515899 and email address keepingchildrensafe@warwickshire.police.uk

Applicants can call the dedicated telephone line, send an email or attend their local police station front desk where details of their enquiry will be taken. More information is also available at www.warwickshire.police.uk/keepingchildrensafe

The force volunteered to participate in the pilot because of the extra protection from harm that it may provide for young people. It is not Megan's Law from the United States, nor Sarah's Law as promoted by Sarah Payne and there is no automatic right to information being disclosed.

All registered sex offenders in Warwickshire have been informed of the pilot in order to ensure they continue to comply with conditions relating to their behaviour.

3. New Safer Neighbourhood Team Base

The number of locations at which members of the community can meet and discuss issues of local concern with members of local Safer Neighbourhood policing teams continues to increase.

The force has this month entered into a commercial partnership with Sainsbury's in Leamington Spa to open a Safer Neighbourhoods office within the store. More than 35,000 people use the store every week and many will now be able to speak to a Police Community Support Officer or police officer without having to make a specific journey to do so.

Warwickshire is only one of a small number of forces to have a local policing team based within a supermarket. The office is within the Warwick Central Safer Neighbourhoods team area but will be available for other teams in the Warwick District to use.

The teams will use the office as a drop in centre rather than their full-time base, with opening times clearly displayed and alternative contact details for times when they are working in the local community.

The force continues to identify locations that are visible and accessible for local communities and welcomes suggestions and ideas from any organisation that believes it may be able to assist.

Safer Neighbourhood teams now have offices or drop-in locations within schools, motorway service areas, libraries, colleges, caravan parks, community centres, village halls, medical centres, major retailers and churches.

4. Action with Partners and Communities to Tackle Violence – ‘Summer Nights’ Rugby

A high-profile community inspired campaign to tackle violence in Rugby took place during July.

The ‘Summer Nights’ anti-violence campaign, inspired by the tragic death of Kevin Wright who died from stab wounds in the town in May, included a knives amnesty that resulted in 95 weapons being surrendered.

The weapons, which included machetes, cleavers and serrated edged knives, were sent away for destruction.

The campaign also involved the creation of a giant pledge wall outside St Andrew’s church, on which people could state their opposition to violence and what they could do personally to help reduce it. A total of 3,000 people signed it to demonstrate their support and determination to do something positive.

Although violent crime rates in Rugby are reducing, the campaign aimed to instil into the community an awareness of how to avoid becoming a victim of violent crime and positive action they could take to contribute to making the town safer and feel safer.

The ‘Summer Nights’ campaign was the first to be organised so closely with local communities and was co-ordinated by the force, Rugby Borough Council and local churches, working with town centre licensees, Warwickshire County Council, local schools, trading standards and environmental health officers, Warwickshire Fire Service, West Midlands Ambulance Service and specialist support agencies including drug awareness teams, youth workers and domestic violence counsellors.

During the week-long campaign:

- Trading Standards officers carried out test purchases in licensed premises. Only one was found to be selling to underage children.
- Some 20 licensed premises in the town were visited and the premises searched, with the support of licensees. Seven were found to have evidence of drug taking and landlords were given advice on how to reduce the opportunity for such behaviour within their premises.
- Pupils from local schools took part in workshops that taught them about the consequences of drinking and how violence can escalate out of control.
- Fast food outlets and taxi companies were visited by Trading Standards and Environmental Health officers to ensure they were adhering to legislation.
- The force stepped up patrol and search activity and worked with other emergency services to establish a ‘triage centre’ in Rugby town centre.

‘Summer Nights’ attracted regional television news coverage as well as high-profile coverage by local newspapers and radio stations.

An operation entitled ‘Your town, your choice’ will take place in Leamington in October to tackle night-time disorder and violence and further develop community and partnership action to tackle unacceptable behaviour within communities in Warwickshire.

5. Global Gathering

The force conducted a major operation to ensure that more than 40,000 people attending this year's Global Gathering festival, near Stratford-upon-Avon, had a safe and enjoyable event.

A total of 55 crimes were reported over the three days of this year's event, with 15 people arrested for possession of drugs with intent to supply to others. Drugs were seized during searches on 390 occasions, with an additional 80 seizures by British Transport Police at Stratford Railways Station.

There were no serious incidents reported and levels of crime, in contrast to other similar events elsewhere in the country, were significantly down on previous years, with the number of crimes detected increasing.

The force's primary objective of protecting young people from harm, particularly with the potential wide availability of drugs during hot weather conditions, was achieved. The force portrayed a positive and professional image to local communities, those attending the event and media organisations.

Officers, staff and volunteers from all directorates of the force worked together seamlessly to deliver the policing required for this event.

6. Bulldog Bash

A major policing operation to protect local communities and members of the public attending the Bulldog Bash, near Stratford, took place last month. The policing operation was a necessary and proportionate response to events that happened in the county and elsewhere last year. It was based upon intelligence and information about the threats to life posed by the event.

The operation attracted some criticism from organisers, some members of local communities and some media organisations. The Police Authority publicly supported the force operation.

The aim of the operation was to deter and detect any criminal activity which may have been planned in relation to the event, which is organised by the Hells Angels. During the four-day operation 507 vehicles and 525 people were searched. Twenty-six people were arrested and 24 weapons were seized, most of which were knives. Seven men await trial in connection with the death of Gerry Tobin on the M40 last year.

7. Operation Crunch

The force launched a major operation targeting burglars and car criminals on 17th September in response to a recent increase in the number of offences across the county.

A proactive team of officers will use both high-profile and covert activity to target offenders, both day and night, over the next three months.

The force-wide unit will be supported by officers and staff in local Safer Neighbourhood teams, reactive and CID officers, Task Force officers and officers in the force's Offender Management Unit, which targets persistent and prolific offenders. They will be provided with up to date information of crime patterns and intelligence to enable officers to plan operations effectively and raise awareness in local communities.

Police will be making direct contact with known criminals in Warwickshire to inform them of Operation Crunch. Every person who has been convicted of burglary or a car-crime related offence within the past 12 months will receive a letter from the force.

Officers engaged on Operation Crunch will also be executing search warrants looking for stolen property and carrying out checks on other premises where they believe stolen property is being sold.

A high-profile publicity campaign, calling on members of local communities to pass information about burglars and car criminals to the police, will form an important part of the operation.

The force also has plans to raise awareness of operations against burglars and car criminals in those communities most affected by it and to make those convicted of such offences more visible to the public. If there is evidence that the local crime rate has gone up following the release from prison of a convicted offender, officers will use undercover and overt techniques to gather evidence.

Chief Superintendent Mak Chishty, Deputy Director of Local Policing is leading the operation.

8. Force – Letters of Appreciation

The force regularly receives letters of appreciation for the support it provides to individuals, communities and organisations. Three are mentioned below for the information of members.

▪ Daniel Palmer – Vulnerable missing person

The mother Daniel Palmer, who went missing at the end of August, has thanked all members of the force involved in searching for him and publicising his disappearance. Daniel was found safe and well. His mother, Patricia Morris-Pinchevsky wrote: “People are very quick to complain about services but slow to commend and I was so comforted by the fact that so much was being done to help. I don’t know how to begin to show my appreciation.

▪ Murder of Robert Clarke, Nuneaton

It is quite rare for the force to receive a letter relating to its response and actions at the scene of a major crime. The professional response provided following the death of Robert Clark outside the Salutation Inn in Nuneaton last month prompted one member of the public to write the following (summarised) letter.

“I am writing to you on behalf of a number of people in regard to the incident outside the Inn...unfortunately I was present at the immediate aftermath .. and was one of [the] people who tended to Robert prior to both the ambulance and police services responding to the 999 call.

“On behalf of the landlord and landlady at the Salutation Inn, several other witnesses, plus myself I would just like to thank you and congratulate you on the conduct, professionalism, humour in the circumstances and understanding of your officers... who we spent a considerable amount of time with during the early part of this week.

“It was without doubt one of the worst incidents we have all been unfortunate to have witnessed... the two uniformed officers who arrived and dealt with the initial scene were exemplary in their conduct... plus the Sergeant who was also present...the Detective Inspector was very pleasant...[and] the trend was continued by the gentleman from your forensic department. He did have to deal with a group of very tired people when he arrived.

“We have discussed our various experiences throughout this week in terms of our dealings with the Warwickshire Police and I can say, to a person, that the response has all been the same, in that everyone has said how good the police have been to deal with.

“I can only imagine the more common public response is to complain about the conduct of police officers, however we thought it only right and proper to inform you of the brilliant conduct of your officers in regard to the fact they made a very traumatic incident easier to deal with.”

A man has been charged with Robert Clark’s murder and is awaiting trial.

▪ **Fatal Air Collison**

The force responded to a mid-air collision on Sunday August 17, in which five people sadly lost their lives. The following letter was received from two Directors of RVL group who employed staff in one of the two aircraft involved.

“I am writing to thank you for the supportive and sensitive way in which you and your colleagues in all the emergency services have handled the various aspects of last weekend’s tragic air accident at Coventry, in which four of our colleagues lost their lives.

“We have since been in contact with members of all [these] families – many of whom have now visited us to meet and chat with their loved ones’ friends and workmates – and they have uniformly praised the way in which the police have assisted them at this difficult time.

“We are deeply appreciative of the work you have done and continue to do.”

Investigations into the collision are continuing by the Air Accident Investigation Branch and the force.

9. Student Officer Development & Assessment

An external accreditor visited the Force on September 9th to review our work in assessing the competence of the student officers we are developing.

The assessor verified more than 300 competencies in agreement with our Assessment Team’s judgment.

He was so satisfied with Force procedures and the competence of our assessors, that he has awarded Direct Claim status. This means that the Force is approved for signing off the competencies on behalf of the external accreditors with the occasional quality assurance check from them, as opposed to waiting for an external verifier to visit us and review every officer’s portfolio. This is a clear reflection of trust in the work the force is carrying out to ensure student officers are developed and assessed to the highest standards.

A number of people have contributed to achieving this success, making the Force one of a minority that have secured this status.

10. Performance

See chart attached.

Keith Bristow
Chief Constable