

SUSSEX POLICE AUTHORITY – 29 JULY 2010

REVIEW OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND THE CHANGING POLICING PERFORMANCE LANDSCAPE

REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CHIEF CONSTABLE AND TREASURER

Introduction

- 1.1 At its April 2009 meeting, the Authority approved the establishment of a new governance structure which introduced three scrutiny committees that were aligned with the three elements of the Local Policing Plan and Serving Sussex principles, namely: Neighbourhood Policing, Keeping People Safe and Best Use of Resources.
- 1.2 In the now embedded culture of continuous improvement within the Authority, and as reflected in the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) that was approved in February 2010, it is recognised that it is sensible to review the new governance arrangements and to seek to enhance scrutiny processes if necessary after the completion of the annual meeting cycle. This report reflects on the principles upon which the Scrutiny Committees were first designed, and suggests improvements to progress the effectiveness of governance arrangements, including the quantity and quality of performance data made available for members.
- 1.3 The policing performance landscape has also changed following the recent announcement abolishing the single confidence target and the Policing Pledge. This report also briefly assesses the impact of these changes on the scrutiny of performance in Sussex.

Are Scrutiny Committees Working?

- 2.1 The fundamental question that needs to be answered in considering the structure is, "Is there evidence that the scrutiny committees are successful in relation to their design principles?" Whilst the structure is still only a year old, consultation with members and officers reflects that the new governance structure is an improvement on the previous structure and a sound foundation upon which to improve further. For clarification, whilst the Authority has three scrutiny committees, the Professional Standards Committee is increasingly focused on scrutiny of performance relating to complaints, CCTV and custody, and therefore is to be included in any reference to scrutiny committees and the recommendations in this report.
- 2.2 There is evidence of the scrutiny committees having a clearer focus on performance, risk and planning, with examples of Sussex Police performance improving dramatically since September 2009. The Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) inspection report following their recent analysis of this Authority, supported this perspective, stating that "The Authority's scrutiny of the performance of the Force has improved over recent months, with the realignment of its committee structure". Accepting the conclusion that the governance structure is generally accepted to be good practice, it is important to focus on how it might be improved further.

Committee Seminars

- 3.1 The practise of holding seminars preceding Police Authority meetings is recognised as a valuable opportunity to develop members' knowledge on specific elements of policing, and to add a third dimension to reports, helping the process of decision-making and scrutiny.
- 3.2 The Professional Standards Committee (PSC) has led the way in developing its own training needs and delivering training before the commencement of the public meeting. The PSC also receive presentations in a closed session seminar on a variety of topics.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the principle of convening members for a private seminar/training session should be adopted for all committees, in order to further knowledge, meet identified training needs, and to provide a private opportunity for reflection on important or sensitive issues. This development would also move the Authority forward in meeting objective 2.6 of the Continuous Improvement Plan.

Lead Members

- 4.1 The scrutiny committees have as a guiding principle that the membership is made up of lead members with responsibility for elements of policing that fall within the thematic business area. These `embedded` members bring experience, understanding and a more in-depth knowledge of their business area to the Committee. It is not recommended that this principle is amended, although it is recognised that there is a risk, or at least the note of a perception that these `embedded` members may actually hinder scrutiny by the wider membership if that member becomes too closely involved in the detail that their objectivity becomes more difficult to sustain, or if the wider membership rely too heavily on lead members to perform all scrutiny duties.
- 4.2 Another guiding principle of the scrutiny committees approved by the Authority at its meeting in April 2009 was to "enhance the transparent scrutiny by the Authority". To further achieve the objective it is recommended that the lead members play a more prominent role in the presentation of reports relating to their areas of responsibility, perhaps jointly presenting the report, or having a section of the report which enables the member to make a statement on their reflections of the roles, highlighting their work and related issues. This will enable other members of the committee to question those lead members on their work in overseeing and supporting that business area as well as continuing specific scrutiny of Sussex Police. It is considered that this subtle change would strengthen the role of lead members and enhance the independence of the accountability arrangements.

Agendas

- 5.1 One of the early design ambitions of the introduction of scrutiny committees was that by aligning business to thematic business areas, it was hoped that the length of the agenda for scrutiny committee meetings would not be so long to dilute the ability of members to effectively scrutinise the key business areas that are higher risk or high profile. Whilst the committees started off in this way, the length of the agendas has with time increased to a point where it is necessary to reconsider the way that business is brought to these committees, particularly the

amount of reports that are for noting by the committee, rather than for any specific deliberation, decision or scrutiny. The Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) considered this dilemma at its meeting in June 2010 and recommended that the Authority consider restricting the agenda items to reports that require scrutiny, deliberation and decision. Reports that are merely for noting are to appear either at the end of agendas or distributed separately.

- 5.2 It is recommended that the Authority approve this principle and endorse the move to ensure that reports that come to the Scrutiny Committees are meaningful and take the business forward rather than being for information. Whilst there may be occasions when it is absolutely necessary and reasonable to do so, there needs to be stricter avoidance of the duplication of papers that go to all three scrutiny committees with very little material difference in their content.

Scrutiny Reviews

- 6.1 The title `Scrutiny Committee` has been designed to ensure that scrutiny of performance remains at the heart of the business of the Authority. The practice of performing scrutiny reviews, whereby small groups of members and officers undertake more detailed analysis and comparison of specific areas of business or risk, is now well established practise in the public sector. The Authority have performed similar reviews, albeit as precursors to the current governance structure of Scrutiny Committees. These have included the Bichard Review into implications in Sussex of the Bichard Report, and a review of Police Community Support Officers.
- 6.2 If properly planned, referenced and resourced, scrutiny reviews should not be bureaucratic or unnecessary. Instead, as has been the case with the reviews the Authority has previously undertaken, they need to be targeted at the most important areas of the business, as agreed with the chairmen of the committees, the Chief Executive, Chief Constable and Treasurer, and undertaken in a spirit of co-operation to ensure that they benefit the issues that are most pertinent to the business. Careful planning and defining of terms of reference for these reviews will be necessary to ensure that they make a difference and are real scrutiny rather than fact-finding missions. The first of these scrutiny reviews will be a review into Neighbourhood Watch, as instigated by the Neighbourhood Policing Scrutiny Committee (NPSC) at its last meeting.
- 6.3 It is recommended that the Chief Executive develops with the Chief Constable and the Chairmen of the four committees, a programme for scrutiny review for the year ahead, for approval by the scrutiny committees at their autumn 2010 meetings. Due cognisance of the limited resources available to the Authority will be required, with the exploration of ways to share experience and capacity with the police, local authorities and other relevant agencies as an essential element of the planning process.

Action Log

7. One of the reflections of the recent Audit Commission and HMIC inspection of the Authority was that "The tracking and recording of its scrutiny and then linking it to improved outcomes for local people is under developed". It is recommended that a review of an action log should form part of each meeting of the committees in order to enhance

the tracking of outcomes as a result of the scrutiny. It is felt that this would improve our capacity to track and record scrutiny.

Performance Management Data

- 8.1 Since the commencement of the scrutiny committees in September 2009, members have received at each meeting headline performance indicators against key Local Policing Plan (LPP) targets that relate to their thematic business area. These reports show headline performance over the preceding three months and how that translates into a direction of travel, with a red, amber, green traffic light analysis of proximity to targets. These reports reflect the headlines in the Force Strategic Performance Information (FSPI). Members have expressed a desire for performance data to be presented in a way that aids improved analysis, particularly in setting the context of performance over time, comparing Sussex within its Most Similar Family (MSF) of forces, and also, where relevant, Sussex Police's performance broken down into policing divisions or departments.
- 8.2 Performance management data is currently made available to members monthly through the FSPI. This is a very detailed analysis with narrative, yet the reports to the Scrutiny Committees have been purposefully light in detail to avoid duplication. However, it is recommended that the way data is provided is improved in the following ways:
- With effect from August 2010, all members will receive a Monthly Performance Summary (MPS) which will provide current performance against the Local Policing Plan targets. This MPS will be structured under the three pillars of Serving Sussex and broken down into divisions and departments (as appropriate).
 - Each quarter, members will receive a Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) which will include trend analysis and contextual comparisons against forces in the Most Similar Family (MSF) within the region, and where appropriate, national comparisons.
 - Each scrutiny committee, which meets quarterly, will then receive a detailed report on their thematic part of the business which will include trend analysis, comparative performance and projections of performance against targets.
- 8.3 The Chief Executive is also exploring the ambition to have current performance data to be readily available via the Authority's website. The Force intranet already has this facility where performance management data is updated daily.
- 8.4 An unintended consequence of the current structure, is that some of the LPP targets that are currently aligned within the Keeping People Safe part of the Plan, ought to fall within the consideration of the NPSC rather than the Protective Services Scrutiny Committee (PSSC). This would mean that targets relating to Vehicle Crime, Burglary and Crimes against a Person will now be considered by the NPSC rather than the PSSC. This will not only better focus the NPSC on the delivery of local policing without the anomaly of elements of their responsibilities being looked after by another committee, but importantly, would help ensure that the PSSC retains a strong focus on the performance of protective services. Appendix A shows the LPP targets and how they will be split between the three scrutiny committees.

- 8.5 It is considered that these improvements will provide members with more information that is timely, relevant and in a more digestible format. It will also afford the scrutiny committees more evidence to perform scrutiny of performance with enhanced understanding of the context of Sussex Police performance. The clear ambition is to provide members with the information they need and these new arrangements will evolve further as members reflect on the changes over the coming months.

Sussex Police Performance Management

- 9.1 Previously, before the current governance arrangements were introduced, the Chairman of the Planning and Performance Steering Group played a lead role in performance management for the Authority. In order to reinforce this link that has been lost in the new arrangements, and to further develop the Authority's engagement with the Corporate Development Department, it is recommended that the Vice-Chairman of the Authority fosters links with the Corporate Development Department with a particular focus on performance management processes. The Vice-Chairman would be supported in this capacity by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 9.2 The Authority's engagement with the Sussex Police performance management process is well developed at divisional and departmental level, with most members routinely attending Divisional Accountability Meetings (DAMs) as informed observers. The benefit to members is considerable, enabling the Authority to understand how performance is managed by service managers within Sussex Police, and it is recommended that attendance continues with all members, seeking to attend at least two DAMs per year within their geographical or departmental area of focus.
- 9.3 The Performance Accountability Meeting (PAM) is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable where he holds to account Divisional Commanders and Department Heads for their performance. The Chief Constable has invited the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Authority to contribute at these meetings to enhance the Authority's understanding and scrutiny of the performance management framework within Sussex Police. This builds on the detailed discussions on performance that take place at the Chairman's Monthly Meetings with the Chief Constable.
- 9.4 In order to meet the recognised development objective outlined in point 2.6 of the CIP to review the effectiveness of meetings, beyond this annual review it is also recommended that the chairmen of the committees involved in the scrutiny of performance carry out a review of the previous round of meetings every quarter and report to the Continuous Improvement Group (CIG). The purpose of this is to maintain the effectiveness of the governance structure and identifying member and officer training needs and areas for further general development.

Changing Policing Performance Landscape

- 10.1 There is little doubt that the policing performance landscape is changing and doing so at a considerable pace. The abolition of the Policing Pledge is welcomed in the respect that it broadly covered core business under Serving Sussex principles of service delivery anyway, yet it brought with it another layer of inspection activity that will not be missed.

- 10.2 Work is currently under way with officers to ensure that the most important elements of the Policing Pledge concept are not lost, but instead remain as local objectives that are managed and scrutinised locally, rather than by central dictat and inspection.
- 10.3 In June 2010, the Home Secretary announced the abolition of the Single Confidence Target` as defined in the British Crime Survey (BCS). The previous measurement was generally discredited and reflects public perception of the way the police and local authorities tackle problems together. The measurement of the Single Confidence Target has now been withdrawn from iQuanta.
- 10.4 Recognising the importance of responsiveness and accountability to local communities, the Authority and the Chief Constable have been engaged in understanding what is important to local people for some time. In 2008, the Authority funded an uplift in resources to allow for detailed research and analysis of frontline policing delivery and its impact on the public, to identify the practices and actions that positively (or negatively) influence confidence in the police. The aim was to ensure that we understood fully the differing priorities of local communities and tailor local delivery to respond to the issues that matter most.
- 10.5 The local surveying which is done in Sussex asks a range of questions so the Authority and the Force can better understand local people's views. Therefore, the local surveys carried out in Sussex are more than a vehicle to measure a target; they provide a good test of how communities feel about the policing they receive and whether the level of service is securing their confidence in the fullest sense.
- 10.6 On 6 July 2010, the Force Executive Board, at which members and the Assistant Chief Executive and Deputy Treasurer, were present, reaffirmed the importance of securing the confidence and the co-operation of local communities to support the Force to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and bring offenders to justice. A force-wide strategy to improve the service provided to the public and further improve public confidence was agreed.
- 10.7 In order to properly scrutinise performance, the Authority needs to be cognisant of a broad range of indicators, and must not rely on raw performance statistics alone, vitally important though they are. It is recommended that the focus on understanding the drivers of public confidence remain a central element of the analysis of policing delivery in Sussex. The importance of understanding what is important to the public is more relevant now than ever as the Authority and the Chief Constable face difficult decisions ahead in order to meet projected funding shortfalls, whilst focusing on maintaining public consent and confidence.
- 10.8 The future of the Police Report Card (PRC) is also unclear, although the general anticipation is that it will remain in some form or another. This last round of scrutiny committees received reports on the elements of the PRC that related most closely to their thematic business area. This provided an opportunity for members to scrutinise chief officers on PRC and the comments made will be taken into account.
- 10.9 It is acknowledged that the PRC only takes account of police performance, at variable points in time, without due reference to the

operating context of policing in a locality. ACPO and HMIC are currently seeking to develop quantitative and qualitative resources that better reflect performance in the `Protection for Serious Harm` domain and it is likely that the Value of Money domain will have more explicit focus on expenditure in the future.

10.10 Whatever the outcome of the changing landscape, it is considered that the scrutiny committee structure is well placed to consider the broad range of performance data available.

Conclusion

11.1 In a changing policing performance landscape, it is important that the Authority remains self-aware and ambitious in its efforts to continuously improve. It is considered that the improvements outlined in this report will further enhance the effective governance structure which enables the Authority to perform its key functions, whilst also maintaining its momentum for continuous improvement, whatever the future police performance or accountability landscape.

Recommended – that

1. the Authority further enhances the successful scrutiny committee structure by adopting the improvements outlined and recommended in this report;
2. the Vice-Chairman of the Authority performs an important link role with the Corporate Development Department with a particular focus on the performance management processes in Sussex Police; and
3. members receive performance management data as outlined in paragraph 8.2.

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