



HERTFORDSHIRE
POLICE AUTHORITY

DRAFT

STRATEGY DOCUMENT

2002 - 2005

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1. Chairman's Forward

Welcome to Hertfordshire Police Authority's first strategic plan. This is a rolling 3 year plan, which we will review and update annually.

The production and publication of this strategy is the first demonstrable outcome of the Best Value Review we have just undertaken of ourselves, but there will be more to follow, as you will see from our improvement plan at the end of this document.

As a Police Authority, one of our key functions is scrutiny of police performance and we are responsible for the Best Value process in the Constabulary. We have taken the view that scrutiny and performance improvement should really begin at home, hence the review of ourselves.

We hope this strategy demonstrates to you our commitment to self improvement and public accountability.

Our second key function is consultation with the Hertfordshire communities and our stakeholders. We would like to know your views and particularly welcome feedback in relation to this strategy, so we can develop and improve it.

We are exploring as many alternative methods of consultation we can think of and will be using a wide variety to ensure we learn what you think of this document.

If you have not obtained this through our website, but you have internet access, then why not visit it, it is the quickest and easiest way to tell us your views, and you might find some items of interest while you are there.

2. Purpose

The purpose of HPA is to secure efficient and effective policing in Hertfordshire. The Police Authority, together with the Home Secretary and the Chief Constable constitute the tripartite governance of policing, advised and supported by HMIC.

Working with local and national partners to reduce crime and fear of crime in the county, the key responsibility of the Police Authority is to ensure that policing priorities and style meet the needs of all local communities.

In a constantly changing environment, we are committed to continuously improving local police performance.

3. Values

In all aspects of our work we will:

- Treat people fairly, openly and with respect
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity and social responsibility
- Seek to engage with all local communities gaining their trust and confidence
- Maintain the highest ethical standards of those in public office
- Conduct ourselves in a constructive and objective manner.

4. What the Police Authority does

a) What we do

The Authority:

- Sets the budget

The budget is set annually in February for the coming year commencing 1 April. About 20 per cent of funds are raised by local council tax, the remainder comes from Government grants.

- Publishes the Policing Plan

The draft annual Policing Plan is prepared by the Chief Constable, after extensive consultation carried out by the Authority and the Constabulary. The final Plan is agreed and published by the Authority before the end of March each year. The Plan includes the Best Value Plan which shows how police services are being reviewed and what improvements have been made.

- Publishes the Annual Report

Each year the Authority publishes a full report on the performance of the Police against targets set in the annual Policing Plan.

- Measures Performance

Performance of the police is measured through regular formal meetings and local consultation groups. In addition to the Policing Plan targets, national Best Value Performance Indicators are used as measures of performance. External monitoring is also carried out by the Audit Commission, District Audit and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary.

- Appoints Senior Police Officers

The Authority appoints and, if necessary, disciplines the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constables.

- Consults with the Public

Finding out what people think of their police services, what things are right and when things go wrong, is one of the key roles of the Authority, and is fundamental to every other aspect of Authority and Constabulary work.

- Manages Independent Custody Visitors

Independent Custody Visitors are local volunteers who monitor, on behalf of the Authority, the welfare of people detained in police cells. Custody visitors call, unannounced, and talk in confidence to prisoners. Problems, comments and complaints are reported directly to the Authority.

- Monitors the Complaints Process

The Authority's Complaints Committee looks at every complaint recorded against a police officer, checking each file to ensure that complaints' procedures have been carried out properly.

- Convenes Police Appeal Tribunals

Police Appeal Tribunals are convened by the Authority and provide officers up to the rank of Superintendent with the right of appeal on a serious disciplinary matter.

b) Police Authority structure

- How we do business

Insert structural diagram.

5. Strategic Goals

We have set ourselves 3 strategic goals, reflecting our 3 key functions.

a) Leadership and Strategy

To provide strong and active support to the Chief Constable in achieving the Constabulary's 5 strategic aims:

- Reduce Crime
- Improve public confidence in the police
- Improve our response to the public
- Reduce disorder
- Improve public safety and feelings of safety

and ensure public accountability to delivery.

b) Community Engagement

To ensure our arrangements for engagement with local communities maximise opportunities for all groups to contribute and provide feedback which demonstrates the impact of any consultation.

c) Performance Scrutiny

To improve police performance by:

- Actively seeking performance information from all relevant sources and analysing this independently
- Setting meaningful targets in the Policing Plan and providing rigorous and informed scrutiny in relation to their achievement
- Taking a leading role in driving and securing the Best Value agenda and monitoring the implementation of review recommendations
- Striving to secure an appropriate level of resourcing for Hertfordshire Constabulary and allocating resources in accordance with local priorities.

6. Strategic Direction

a) Introduction – the Challenges ahead

This is the first formal strategy the Police Authority has prepared, and it has been done at a time when we face many challenges, some national and other local. All these challenges present a combination of opportunities and threats and we are committed to maximising the former, whilst limiting any damage from the latter. In particular we have identified the following as priorities for the next 3 years, to be reviewed annually:

- The wide ranging national police reform programme
- Balancing the twin aims of reducing crime and increasing public reassurance
- Resourcing policing adequately
- Recruitment and retention of police officers
- Implementing the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Meeting our new Crime and Disorder responsibilities
- Modernising our estate
- Making best use of new technology

b) Hertfordshire Police Authority – our role and special contribution

Police Authorities, as they are currently constituted, were created by the Police and Magistrates Court Act 1994, amended and incorporated in the Police Act 1996. Best Value legislation brought in a significant increase in role for the Authority, locating responsibility for the Policing Performance Plan and securing Best Value with the Authority.

The Police Authority, whilst working in close partnership with the Chief Constable, has a distinct and separate role. Our statutory functions and responsibilities are clear and explicit, but on their own, they do not define our role. Two critical questions we have asked ourselves during our own Best Value Review are:

1. What is our special and unique contribution to improving police performance?
2. Where and how we can add to most value to policing?

The phrase ‘critical friend’ is often used to describe the relation of the police authority with the police force. We believe this usefully captures a key element of our role, combined with ‘community watchdog’ for policing. We fully recognise the importance of working in partnership with many others locally and nationally in order to be effective ourselves, but we have identified the following as ‘special and unique’ about what we bring:

- A wide variety of backgrounds, including business, public service and political
- Local democratic representation, local criminal justice experience and a special commitment to Hertfordshire because we live and/or work here
- A long term constructive relationship with the Constabulary, so that our scrutiny is ongoing and contextual, rather than ‘snapshot’ and short
- A holistic scrutiny, both formal and informal, focusing on all aspects of policing, from the Policing Plan and best value to complaints and finance

We know from a public consultation exercise we undertook as part of our review that very few people are aware of our distinct role – our sample suggests only 1 in 8. As a result we have also asked ourselves whether or not this matters. The majority of organisations with any level of scrutiny responsibility generally only gain a high public profile when things in the organisation they scrutinise go badly wrong. On this basis, lack of awareness of our role could be a positive indicator about public satisfaction with policing in the county. We believe we need to find this out.

Determining when and how we could add most value proved to be a difficult and challenging question, yet one we know is critical to answer. To help ourselves, we have carried out 3 self assessment exercises, focusing on our 3 key areas of responsibility: Leadership and Strategy, Community Engagement and Performance Scrutiny and relating to our strategic goals.

As a result, we now have a much clearer picture of our strengths and the areas where we know we need to improve. We hope that the service improvement plan we have developed to implement these findings will ensure that we:

- Maximise the value we can add to improving police performance
- Minimise duplication with other partners
- Demonstrate outcomes
- Increase the impact of our work
- Cease or reduce activity when we have no evidence of effectiveness or value for money

- Continuously evaluate and review all our work

7. Delivering Improvement

Conducting our own Best Value Review has been the first step of our improvement programme, and several key themes have emerged from this process which are addressed in more detail in the improvement plan.

We identified our overall strengths as:

- A high level of member and officer commitment
- A good balance of skills , knowledge, experience, competence and interest
- A constructive and well functioning professional relationship with the Constabulary
- Active ownership and engagement with the Best Value process
- Considerable infrastructure in place for public consultation combined with a high level of activity

These are areas for improvement and what we want to achieve:

- A cohesive, strategic approach to our functions
- Effective performance measurement of ourselves
- Demonstrable impact of our work, with a focus on outcomes
- Regular evaluation and review of all we do
- Consistency of approach throughout the county
- Engagement with all communities in particular ‘hard to reach’ groups
- Rigorous performance scrutiny with independent information analysis
- A member and officer structure that supports our strategic goals

The improvement plan is in the appendices, together with details of the strengths and areas for improvement drawn up in our self assessment workshops.

Our priorities for improvement in the coming year are:

- The production of a rolling 3 year strategy

- The development of a member and officer structure to support the strategic goals
- The preparation of annual plans, with objectives, targets and performance measures for performance scrutiny and community engagement
- Member and officer training, development and selection
- An evaluation of support options, including the treasurers function, IT and offices