



REPORT TO LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

20 January 2009

1. MEETING

The Authority has met on 24th October, 18th November and 12 December 2008.

Set out below are some of the issues discussed.

2. YARLS WOOD DETENTION CENTRE

On 30th September the Judgement was handed down from the High Court following the trial that took place on 24 and 25 June 2008 to consider a number of issues in relation to the claim made by Group 4 and their insurers (Yarl's Wood Immigration Ltd, GSL Ltd and Creechurch Dedicated Ltd) under the Riot Damages Act 1886.

The Judge has decided that Group 4 and their insurers are not entitled to receive compensation from Bedfordshire Police Authority for the damages resulting from the disturbance at the Yarl's Wood Detention Centre on 14 and 15 February 2002.

This means that the Judge has ruled that the Riot Damages Act 1886 was not intended to apply to this situation and that the owners and operators of the Centre had a public duty themselves to maintain law and order.

The Judge granted the claimants (Group 4 and their insurers) leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal.

The Police Authority has now succeeded in two important aspects of the case. In June, a different Judge ruled that the Authority's excess insurers, D A Constable, were liable under a public liability insurance policy to meet any compensation that might become payable as a result of the riot damages claim.

D A Constable have already submitted an appeal to the Court of Appeal against the first decision. It is almost inevitable that Group 4 and their insurers will also submit an appeal against the second ruling. Therefore, the next round of hearings will take place in the Court of Appeal. D A Constable's appeal is to

be heard in late January 2009.

3. PERFORMANCE

The Authority has welcomed 'sustained improvements' in many of the key performance areas of Bedfordshire Police.

Compared to the same period last year:

- Domestic Burglary has seen a reduction of 11% and a 3.5% increase in the number of offences detected.
- Vehicle Crime is significantly less, with a 15% drop in the number of thefts from a vehicle and a 17% drop in the number of vehicle thefts. Detections in these areas are up 4.3% and 4.2% respectively.
- Violence against the person has seen a 10% fall and an increase in detections of 10.2%.
- Criminal damage has fallen by 8%, robbery by 18%.
- Drug related crime and sexual offences have risen by 13% and 26% respectively, and the Authority sought assurances on the work being undertaken to tackle these areas.

Members are also pleased to see that the Force is meeting the target for the overall recorded crime rate.

The overall improvements in Bedfordshire Police Performance are reflected by the recent responses to the Citizens Panel 'Blue Light' survey carried out on behalf of the Authority. Approximately 1,000 residents in Bedfordshire and Luton took part in this telephone survey.

Responses show that there are high levels of satisfaction with, and confidence in, policing in Bedfordshire and Luton.

People felt that police understand and deal well with local issues; treat the public fairly and with respect; and are aware of the local safer neighbourhood teams.

This was particularly noticeable in South Bedfordshire, where over 82% of respondents felt that their local police were doing a good job, with nearly 72% feeling satisfied the issues that affected their neighbourhood were being dealt with.

In addition, 83% agreed that the priorities set by the Police meet the needs of their local area, with a mere 6% feeling that they did not. These priorities are:

- Bedfordshire County Division: Burglary, criminal damage, roads policing, domestic abuse and increasing police visibility.

- Luton Division: Overall crime reduction, antisocial behaviour, domestic abuse and increasing police visibility.

The positive responses to the survey show Bedfordshire to be performing well when compared to other areas in the country, illustrating that the focus on performance improvements is bringing the desired outcomes.

Figures show that the majority of people feel safe, both in daylight hours and at night. Overwhelmingly, people felt that the level of crime or anti-social behaviour had either stayed the same or decreased, while just 16% felt that their quality of life is affected by crime. This too compares well to other areas of England and Wales.

The key area of concern was household crime, with nearly a quarter of respondents mentioning that it was something that concerned them. This figure rose to a third in Luton and work is already underway to address this before it affects confidence levels.

Work will also continue to increase awareness of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams, which although considerably higher at 59% than in previous surveys, will benefit from sustained publicity programmes.

The survey also showed satisfaction figures to be lower with regard to minor crimes and police presence. It is expected that as the Safer Neighbourhood Programme embeds still further this element will also improve.

4. COLLABORATION

In November Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Authorities agreed to progress business cases to provide joint services in three key areas of work.

Plans will now be developed to establish a joint Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire:

- Dog Section
- Professional Standards Department (to manage public complaints and conduct and performance issues for both Forces)
- Scientific Services including a joint Chemical Laboratory facility

If approved by both Police Authorities in February, the new joint units will be operational by 1st April 2009 and will produce savings in the region of £650k per annum, which will be re-invested in frontline policing across the two counties.

The proposals have been developed in consultation with staff by the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Joint Collaboration Programme based at Harpenden, which was set up specifically to explore opportunities to improve efficiency, effectiveness and resilience across a range of key policing services. Their work is overseen by the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Joint Police Authority Collaboration Group, which is chaired by Peter Conniff, Chair of Bedfordshire Police Authority and with Stuart Nagler as Vice-Chair representing Hertfordshire.

5. REVENUE BUDGET 2009/10

The 2008/09 Police Finance Settlement announced in January 2008 included for the first time a Provisional Police Finance Settlement for the ensuing two years, these being 2009/10 and 2010/11. On 26th November 2008 the Minister of State for Local Government announced the proposed finance settlement which confirmed the level of grant included in the three-year settlement, for 2009/10, continued to be at the level of grant Bedfordshire expected to receive.

The total provision for policing revenue grants in 2009/10 will be £9.482M representing an overall increase of 2.8%.

The Provisional Settlement for Bedfordshire provides for an actual increase of 3.3% compared to the 2008/09 Settlement increasing Police Grant from £68.508M to £70.754M, an overall increase of £2.246M.

The following is a summary of the overall position for 2009/10:

	£M	£M
Total Formula Grant	70.754	68.508
Funded by:		
Business Rates	23.879	21.496
Revenue Support Grant	5.511	3.470
Police Grant	<u>41.364</u>	<u>40.114</u>
Total	70.754	68.508

The specific grants will continue at similar levels to 2008/09.

The settlement will provide for funding for an approximate additional 11 police officers which would be added to the budgeted police officer establishment bringing the number up to 1,285. This would increase the number of police officers and police staff funded by external grant to 155 police officers and 152 police staff including 128 PCSOs.

Based upon this settlement and the pressures and assumptions for the 2009/10 budget the potential budget requirement is £100.395M which represents a 4.5% increase on the 2008/09 revenue budget of £96.056M and a increase of 4.8% increase on the notional budget figure of £95.790M, against which the budget increase would be measured for capping purposes. The impact on the Council Tax in funding the potential budget requirement would be an increase of approximately 7.3% from £135.28 to £145.12 Band D equivalent.

In order to fulfil the requirements of the three-year strategic plan as well as sustain performance improvement particularly around the two key areas for the Authority, these being Protective Services and Neighbourhood Management, there are cost implications. To incorporate this growth a council tax increase of 10.3% would be required.

In recognition that this is not an acceptable increase and taking into account the Government's intention to use capping powers to deal with excessive increases the Authority will consider four Council Tax options. Three options are to be based on Council Tax increases of either 3%, 4% or 5% and the fourth on a 4% budget increase on the notional budget figure of £95.790M (equivalent to a 4.5% Council Tax increase)

Consultation with the public around the budget has been undertaken through the 'Blue Light' survey during January and views expressed will be taken into account when considering the budget. Given the extensive consultation undertaken last year and the commitment made to council tax payers that last year's precept increase was a one-off investment in the Comprehensive spending review (CSR) period this approach is robust and provides value for money.

The Authority will on 13 February 2009 determine the Budget, Budget Requirement, Precept and Council Tax for 2009/2010.

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY