

### Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board, 5 December 2018

#### **Report of Worcestershire County Council's Representative, Mr Steve Mackay on West Mercia's Withdrawal from the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire, as discussed at West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, 29 October 2018**

1. On 9 October 2018 the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police announced that they would formally end the current Strategic Alliance between West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police. The reasons given for this were 'to deliver more effective and efficient services to communities, and ensure the public get better value for money'<sup>1</sup>. The Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board asked for an update about this meeting from myself as the Council's appointee on the Police and Crime Panel.
2. The Strategic Alliance was set up in March 2012 via a set of Collaborative Agreements. The objective of the creation of the Strategic Alliance is to provide 'an effective and efficient service to both Forces.....' The 'Strategic Alliance Objectives' set out the benefits, which include all or a combination of the following:
  - To provide a more efficient and effective policing service in the geographical areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, Warwickshire and Worcestershire
  - Enhanced capability and capacity
  - Greater resilience and flexibility in the use of skilled specialist staff
  - Reduction in duplication of roles and resources
  - Greater opportunity to maximise financial savings
3. The Strategic Alliance Agreement sets out the governance arrangements for the Alliance. Further details are available on the PCC's website: <https://www.westmercia-pcc.gov.uk/key-information/policing-alliance-and-how-its-governed/> .
4. Whilst the Alliance was set up by the then Police Authorities, provision was made for it to continue when the Police and Crime Commissioners took over governance of the Police later in 2012.
5. In accordance with the Agreement, the PCC and Chief Constable have given one year's notice of their intention to end the current Alliance arrangement, effective 8 October 2019. They have publicly stated a preference of negotiating a new and mutually beneficial collaborative relationship with Warwickshire.
6. In view of the strategic nature of the Alliance and concern and interest engendered following the announcement of West Mercia's notice to leave the Alliance, the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel invited the PCC to a special meeting on 29 October to discuss the reasons for the decision.

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<sup>1</sup> News release, West Mercia PCC [website](#)

7. During the course of the discussions at the meeting the Panel were advised that:
- The costs of withdrawing from the Alliance were not known at this stage but the PCC confirmed the change would not affect the current year's budget
  - The current funding agreement was that West Mercia met 69% of the costs and Warwickshire 31% which committed West Mercia Police disproportionately
  - The PCC expressed the view that while conversations had been held with Warwickshire during the last year or so these had not led to any change to that arrangement, hence the decision to withdraw from the alliance. However, he commented that he was committed to working with Warwickshire as long as it benefitted the residents of West Mercia
  - Potential options for future service delivery include a shared service, hosted services with either Force, or stand alone services
  - The current governance arrangements within the Alliance slowed down decision making, with most decisions being made via meetings between the two Chief Constables. The Panel was given an example of where there were no service level agreements within the Alliance which impacted adversely on West Mercia. Warwickshire had significantly more firearms incidents than all of West Mercia but West Mercia was funding 69% of the service. Similarly, greater resources were committed to road policing within Warwickshire. A key part of the delivery plan for the Alliance was a shared control room at Hindlip, involving closure of other sites, but Warwickshire had withdrawn from this and established a stand alone facility in Warwick.
8. The Panel was concerned that it had not been advised about the discussions and potential withdrawal from the Alliance before the public announcement. It has asked for regular updates to each Panel meeting, with information being provided in exempt session if necessary. The Panel will also be involved in scrutinising the PCC's proposal for the precept between now and early February 2019, where potential financial implications of the changes can be discussed.

Mr Stephen Mackay