Police force collaboration

An independent review of the Warwickshire / West Mercia Strategic Alliance

Kate Flannery and **John Graham**

November 2014

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The global financial crisis in 2007 ushered in the era of austerity that now dominates much of the debate around public services – where do priorities lie, and how much of their cost can the public purse bear? For police forces the impact has been dramatic. The need to adapt policing models to meet changing and growing demands, with little real growth in income, had tested chief officers and police authorities for a number of years. But the coalition government has, since 2010, ramped up these challenges. All forces must now reduce budgets in real terms by up to 20 per cent over the five-year comprehensive spending review period, while attempting to satisfy local communities' demands for traditional/visible policing *and* transform operational practices to cope with internet-enabled crime that recognises no conventional boundaries.

How have forces and Police and Crime Commissioners reacted to this challenge? Unsurprisingly, no silver bullet has been discovered – rather, a menu of options has emerged that encompass internal restructuring, savings programmes, outsourcing, regionalisation (mostly of specialist operations) and collaboration. HM Inspectorate of Constabulary has subjected forces' efforts to independent scrutiny and, while praising the achievement of budget reductions, has been largely critical of the failure to maximise collaborative opportunities. Indeed, it has identified some examples of retrenchment, despite the Home Office's expectation that collaboration would help forces meet the twin pressures of financial constraint and new policing demands.

Against this background, the success of the collaboration between Warwickshire and West Mercia is notable. Its origins lie in discussions held in 2010 and early 2011 about the nature and extent of collaboration between the four forces in the West Midlands region. The region had a strong track record of productive working together, especially on specialist operations and protective services, but the four could not agree on how to move the agenda on. Concerned about their future prospects outside a regional collaborative framework, Warwickshire and West Mercia chief officers and police authority chairs agreed to embark on what became known as a 'strategic alliance'. After the dissolution of police authorities the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) determined to continue with the alliance. Three years on, the bulk of policing and support services across the two force areas are delivered under unified leadership and processes. As a model of integrated police provision it has much to commend it, offering local people greater protection from harm and value for money.

But despite a confidence in the Strategic Alliance and its impact, chief officers and the PCCs did not want to rest on their laurels and invited the Police Foundation to conduct an independent review. This looked critically at both achievements and lessons to be learnt, and identified ways in which the Alliance could progress. The work is summarised in this report, focusing on:

- clarifying leadership roles;
- strengthening accountability and governance;
- securing a cultural identity for the Alliance without losing what is valued about Warwickshire and West Mercia as individual entities;
- improving the ability to manage organisational change and

- resolving anomalies in structure and processes.

Our conclusion is that the Strategic Alliance forged by Warwickshire and West Mercia is a beacon of collaboration that others can learn from, notably the integration of operational policing across force boundaries and the harmonisation of finance, HR and estate services. (A note of caution, however; its success is rooted in similarities of policing environment, culture and working practice that make its full replication elsewhere less than straight forward.)

Taking stock: progress to date

Celebrating success

The achievements of the Strategic Alliance to date are significant and should be trumpeted as a model that others could follow, albeit with an acknowledgement that the process of forging the Alliance was not perfect and lessons have had to be learned. In particular, the Strategic Alliance has provided the citizens and communities of Warwickshire and West Mercia with greater protection from harm and more visible policing, alongside evidence that value for money is being secured. Many of those interviewed paid testament to the influence of Keith Bristow, whose foresight and vision have left an indelible legacy not just on Warwickshire Police but in laying the foundations for the success of the Alliance.

It was a brave move to go down this path and the implementation of the original blueprint has been swift and effective. Other forces look with envy at the harmonisation of terms and conditions, an issue that has blighted many other collaborative ventures [1]. The People Movement Plan deserves particular mention, as it was a large-scale redistribution of human assets that could have failed spectacularly but in fact worked well, as all staff association representatives concurred. In terms of operational policing, the Alliance can now more effectively 'surge' resources to deal with unexpected demand, 24-hour cover is available across more policing functions, more officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) are based in Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) than in pre-Alliance days and a wider pool of expertise and experience can be tapped to respond effectively to policing challenges. Chief officers are reluctant to blow the trumpet too loudly because they recognise some limitations with the model,

but from an independent perspective the Alliance offers invaluable learning to other forces on successful collaboration.

Managing a major change programme is difficult enough without having to find significant financial savings and to do this with little adverse impact on performance is quite remarkable, albeit helped by a decline in recorded crime levels in recent years. The Alliance has clearly benefited both forces, though at this stage not necessarily equally. Staff in both forces feel they have been taken over by the other, and benefits differ in different places – ie, they are situation-specific. Undoubtedly, Warwickshire's position would by now have been perilous without the Alliance – swingeing cuts in police numbers would have been necessary and neighbourhood policing could have been decimated. West Mercia could, on its own, have provided effective policing while securing the first phase of required cuts, but with each passing year this would become more and more difficult to achieve outside collaboration such as the SA. It is thus quite evidently a symbiotic arrangement that offers a platform for success rather than simply economic survival. Perhaps the key measure of the Alliance's achievement is that any future attempt to unravel this model of integrated police provision would fail all serious tests of cost-effectiveness and practicability. There is no going back to two stand-alone forces.

Warwickshire and West Mercia have arrived at a critical juncture in their work to bring policing services together. Neighbourhood/local policing and the great majority of specialist operations have in effect been merged under unified processes and leadership. Similarly, strategic policy-setting such as annual policing plans

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[1] The HMIC report, *Valuing the Police* (July 2014), criticises the current state of collaboration as sub-optimal, with stalling or backwards movement in some areas and particular weaknesses in joining up HR and Finance.

covers both force areas consistently while support services – principally finance, HR, estate management and IT – are increasingly close to being fully integrated. The question thus arises – where next? At first blush the two forces have merged in all but name but closer examination reveals that this is not an accurate picture. At the apex of the management and governance structures sit two PCCs, two chief constables and two deputies, with some attendant complications around clarities of roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. Two distinct organisational cultures remain evident, while some structural anomalies persist. The route map to move the Alliance forward in the face of increasingly serious financial challenges is therefore a work in progress, hence the invitation to the Police Foundation to cast a critical and independent eye on what has been achieved and, more particularly, what remains to be done.

Our findings are set out under five headings, outlining current problems/anomalies and then later in the report positing possible solutions under the same headings, specifically:

- Leadership and the executive team
- Accountability and governance
- Culture and local identity
- Managing the change process
- Structural issues

Leadership and the executive team

Both Warwickshire and West Mercia benefit enormously from a cadre of chief officers and senior police staff who possess not only a wealth of experience and expertise but who demonstrate high degrees of trust in each other, and a

willingness to 'give and take' on key decisions that is unusual at this level. Personal relationships have been a bedrock for the success of the Alliance to date, as both PCCs acknowledge. But it would be a mistake to take this good fortune for granted.

One threat to the growing credibility and success of the Alliance is what can only be described as sub-optimal leadership arrangements, with two chief constables (CCs) and two deputy chief constables (DCCs) overseeing an increasingly unified policing organisation. For an organisation with an overarching principle of *only doing things once* the duplication of roles and responsibilities in the executive team is a glaring contradiction. It will become increasingly difficult to defend as the next round of cuts begins to bite deep, with a real prospect of job losses. Nationally, a police organisation of around 3,000 sworn officers and 2,500 staff would typically be managed by a six-person executive team of one chief, one deputy and four assistant chief officers. The Alliance has eight people working at this level, which is hard to justify and invites challenge as to whether this is a good use of public money.

Both PCCs acknowledge that the current arrangements can at times slow down decision-making and entail varying degrees of compromise. But it is easy to underestimate how much resource, effort and creative energy is required for this dual leadership to function. The current post-holders strive to make the arrangement work but strong personal relationships between the incumbents cannot be guaranteed in future as personnel change. In addition, the willingness to compromise on operational and other decisions may become ever more difficult without some clarity on how the leadership dilemma will be resolved. The majority

of those spoken to believe that a leadership team of one CC, a DCC, two Assistant Chief Constables (ACCs) and one or two assistant chief officers would work well. While there would be some difficulties in one CC reporting to two PCCs these are not insurmountable, and to a limited extent the two CCs each have dual reporting already.

The ACCs carry major portfolios and have been heavily involved in designing and implementing the unified structure while the DCCs and CCs seem relatively less weighed down. (And perhaps as a consequence involve themselves in tactical issues such as equipment changes that should be delegated to others.) The planned retirement of Neil Brunton, Warwickshire DCC, presents an opportunity to review roles and responsibilities, and the decision not to fill the vacancy on a substantive basis, pending longer-term decisions about leadership, is a sensible move.

Accountability and governance issues

The governance and accountability framework for policing changed radically in 2012 when the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act created elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to replace police authorities. (The same Act strengthened the duty upon policing bodies to collaborate where it is in the interests of the efficiency or effectiveness of their own and other police force areas.) The PCC role is not yet embedded; there have been some high profile problems and disputes and it is fair to say that 'the jury is still out' as to whether PCCs have met the expectations set by the government[2]. The key relationship is that between the PCC and his/her chief constable (CC), with PCCs having the ultimate power to hire and fire.

Accountability in Warwickshire and West Mercia is complicated by the fact that the Alliance – which is effectively one policing organisation at the level of ACC and below – requires its personnel to report up to two PCCs, two chiefs and two deputies. This complexity is reflected in a framework that currently falls short of good governance principles. At the apex of the governance structure is the Alliance Governance Board, which meets monthly and is chaired by the PCCs in rotation; all chief officers attend. A weekly Executive Board is chaired by the two CCs in rotation, informed by a weekly Operational Board. The two chiefs meet with their respective PCCs, approximately weekly. The Police and Crime Panels meet in public approximately once a quarter, with a focus on the Policing Plans and budgets.

Problems with governance and accountability

Our overall finding is that governance is over-engineered, with lots of duplication: both CCs and both DCCs often attend meetings in tandem and frequent referrals to several boards are required before decisions can be confirmed. The main reason for this cumbersome approach seems to be a perceived need on the part of each force to check what is being done so that it is not disadvantaged. This need should abate as trust strengthens, but there is an enduring vulnerability in that trust is based heavily on personal relationships, which will of necessity change over time. But at the same time that the governance and accountability framework is over-engineered, cumbersome and bureaucratic, important gaps exist – in particular, there is too little holding to account for value for money. A further concern is that the Alliance may not have adequately

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[2] See the Home Affairs Select Committee Report, *Police and Crime Commissioners: Progress to date* (May 2014); it concluded that "It is too early to say whether the introduction of PCCs has been a success" and highlighted the need for more intensive training for new commissioners.

future-proofed its commendable approach of joint ownership of governance responsibilities alongside a 69:31 division of resources. In other words, a future West Mercia PCC might seek to reflect the distribution of resources by abrogating a greater share of decision-making and governance.

Accountability for operational and financial matters is not well integrated, especially now that external audit has been weakened by the abolition of the Audit Commission and the use nationally of an opaque accounting framework that few people understand. Overall, value for money is not assessed in a sufficiently robust way, although with a Joint Treasurer and single Director of Finance for the two forces there should be many opportunities to address key value for money issues. Both PCCs praised the work of the Joint Audit Committee (one committee serves both PCCs) which has a role in holding both chiefs and PCCs to account, giving it a pivotal role in the governance arrangements. But across the country Joint Audit Committees are wrestling with the challenge of providing assurance both to chief constables and PCCs even though one of those bodies is charged with holding the other to account.

Accountability is weakened by the *ad hoc* nature of meetings between PCCs and chief officers. Not all meetings between the two PCCs and two chief constables occur on a regular formal, minuted basis, with consequent risks that decisions may be made on the basis of informal understanding and will lack transparency. The two PCC and Deputy PCCs would benefit from meeting more regularly with their respective Chief Executives present, enabling the latter to bring greater coherence to the work of the two offices and ensuring effective delivery of PCC decisions.

The two Police and Crime Panels are not effective in attracting and engaging members of the public; their task of holding PCCs to account is undermined by constant churn in membership, with attendant problems of poor understanding of the Panel's role[3]. Surprisingly, the Chair of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel has never met his counterpart in Warwickshire (despite months of trying to set up such a meeting). Public accountability is very limited – meetings are typically attended by only a handful of individuals. The West Mercia PCC has created the role of 'community ambassador' to extend his network of 'eyes and ears' on the ground but the role seems neither well defined nor understood. They are described as having a 'roving brief' with the attendant risk that they confuse answerability and accountability – SNT managers are not answerable to the ambassadors but are accountable only up the policing chain. On occasions the ambassadors' enthusiasm has led them to interfere in local policing matters, or attempt to explain publicly about an operational incident but get the explanation wrong.

The Alliance seems unbalanced in respect of transparency and devolvement, partly because Warwickshire was a highly devolved force and West Mercia was gripped from the centre, especially on finance and staffing issues. The Alliance exhibits both characteristics but not necessarily in the right ways – ie, sometimes it is 'loose' when it should be 'tight' and vice-versa. If ground rules do exist on what should be delegated and how it is accounted for then they are not well known or understood. Staff associations are involved at key stages of debate and decisions but without clear ground rules on confidentiality – eg, on the decision about where to site the merged

3 These problems are not by any means specific to Warwickshire and West Mercia – the Home Affairs Select Committee report *Police and Crime Commissioners: Progress to date* (May 2014) noted that "many panels have to date struggled to understand their powers and define their role". It repeated one former panel member's description of it as a "crocodile with rubber teeth".

Witness Care function, the unions 'set lots of hares running' about the various options in advance of any decisions and before the ACC was ready to put specific proposals up for consultation. This caused unnecessary alarm and distress among staff, who were looking for clarity and certainty.

Performance monitoring

In line with a changed emphasis from the Home Secretary, both Warwickshire and West Mercia have moved away from a prescriptive targets regime. This has proved beneficial in creating more space for a focus on protection from harm but work is still required to embed a full understanding of how this principle affects policing on a daily basis. How should it influence decisions made about how officers spend their time and how managers direct resources? The answers to these and related questions need to be set within a fuller and more accurate analysis of demand – *"Where and how do the communities and citizens of Warwickshire and West Mercia need protection from harm?"* – that has yet to be elaborated. A comprehensive understanding of demand will become increasingly important as the policing environment changes rapidly, and thus its absence is a glaring gap.

The absence of national or force targets does not in any way eliminate the need for appropriate performance information. PCCs cannot know whether service standards are rising or falling without relevant data, presented in an accessible and timely manner. Currently, PCCs lack both independent performance information and the capability to analyse what data is available, though they recognise the need to improve in this area. Both forces have stopped the regular performance forums which existed in the 'old' era

of targets, league tables, sanctions for poor performance etc. In the absence of robust performance monitoring, PCCs may too often resort to 'analysis by anecdote' – feeding back comments or complaints picked up on their travels around farmers' markets, parish councils, neighbourhood forums etc. It is also difficult, when discussing police performance with a lay audience, to avoid defaulting to simple metrics such as police numbers, response times and crime rates rather than preventative measures – less quantifiable but more valuable.

Questions put to chief officers too often relate to detailed management matters rather than governance. Worryingly, there is evidence that at times the responsibility to pose challenging questions to the CC is subjugated to the importance of maintaining good working relationships. Risk registers exist but there is little evidence that they are used properly. Did the PCCs know, for example, that HMIC was likely to report critically about both forces' poor record on rape investigation? While it may not always be easy to maintain a healthy balance between challenge and support, such balance is essential if PCCs are to maximise beneficial outcomes for their policing areas.

Culture and local identity

Three key elements permeate the organisational vision/values of the Alliance:

- everything should be done just once;
- protecting the public from harm is at the heart of all police actions; and
- prescriptive targets are not appropriate.

Moving forward the task is to ensure that structures, processes and functions are all

aligned to these three principles. Two potential additional elements relate to the practicalities of how things get done, namely the principles of 'give and take' and 'going where the work is'. (The latter in particular builds on doing everything just once.) More work is still needed to embed vision/values, especially on the centrality of protection from harm among West Mercian officers and staff. Any decision to move to a single Operations and Communications Centre (OCC) base may also be a determining factor in how culture change will be managed.

A consensus is apparent about the main differences in organisational culture that came to the surface as the two forces joined services together. The West Mercia culture is characterised as more traditional, hierarchical and deferential with a tendency towards risk aversion, but also with a strong 'one family' ethos. Warwickshire's small size is reflected in short lines of communication, a sense that everyone knows everyone and feels able to approach chief officers directly, and decisions are devolved as far as practicable. But at times devolvement went too far and decisions had to be recalled to the centre.

As work progressed to unify policies and processes a deliberate decision was made not to push for reconciliation of these cultural traits – rather, to let a new culture emerge organically over time. In recognising that some aspects of the old cultures may not work in the new set-up it is important not to 'throw babies out with the bathwater'. A culture audit has been undertaken to assist with this stock-take of what needs to be preserved and where change is required, which is commendable.

A central motif of the emerging new culture is 'one workforce' but some clarification would be helpful to ensure that this very worthy principle can be embraced. For some people the phrase means an end to traditional barriers between police officers and police staff – the latter often feeling that they are treated as second class citizens. Warwickshire's leadership has worked hard to create a sense of 'we're all in this together' and achieved a commendable degree of success. However, some West Mercia officers and staff perceive the 'one workforce' adage to mean that Warwickshire and West Mercia forces are now a unified grouping. Both interpretations are helpful in moving the Alliance forward but should not be used interchangeably.

Differences between towns within force boundaries can be more marked than variances across county borders; for example, Worcester and Stratford-upon-Avon have more commonalities than Telford and Hereford. It is important therefore not to overstate the significance of artificial constructs such as West Mercia, which means little or nothing to most citizens. It may be more helpful to consider simply that the Alliance provides policing services to four counties, each with a proud history and all requiring similar – but not identical – levels and types of policing.

The issue of logos – notably the traditional bear and ragged staff in Warwickshire, which is the county logo as well as the force's – and wording on lanyards, vehicles etc has been vexing at times but securing a consensus here on core principles could be extremely helpful. While there is clearly some attachment on the part of some officers and staff to logos and existing wording, it is highly debatable whether the public notice – or care about – much other than the word 'police'. Logos

and badging do not in themselves contribute anything to quality of service and there is no evidence that they affect trust and confidence. Consequently, decisions on these matters should be driven by business interests – eg, saving money by standardising uniforms – rather than subjective attachments.

Numerous interviewees referred to the use of social media to communicate with local people, particularly on aspects of neighbourhood policing. Unlike traditional, unilateral communication channels such as television and advertising, social media provides an opportunity to establish a two-way dialogue with audiences, actively engaging people in conversations rather than simply providing them with information. In practice, however, the police often use social media platforms simply to give or ask for information rather than engage in a dialogue with the public. It will become increasingly important for the police to understand and exploit different forms of social media, developing better ways of accessing and interpreting the information that is available through it. In the absence of a national social media strategy the Strategic Alliance should consider developing its own.

Managing the change process

As the Strategic Alliance enters its third year the PCCs and chief officers are keen to examine how it can be *"strengthened and deepened"*. A pre-requisite is to review the first phase of amalgamating services, which has been described bluntly as *"crashing the two organisations together"*. The early change management programme was conducted in silos, with only a co-ordinating role for the centre and with the two

DCCs acting jointly as Senior Responsible Officers (SROs). Most of the work was directorate-led and inevitably some differences emerged. For example, in some instances staff were relieved from their ordinary duties to implement changes but more typically people delivered the required changes on top of their day jobs.

Effective communication is a fundamental underpinning of a well-managed change programme, aligned with a consultative approach that helps ensure a degree of 'ownership' on the part of those affected by changes. Clearly, a lot of effort went into communicating to the workforce what had to change and why, but some improvement can be made in future by adopting some good practice approaches. In particular, the style of communication matters almost as much as content and, on occasions, staff were dismayed by the length of e-mails and memos and/or the amount of jargon used to convey information. They switched off and did not feel impelled to take responsibility for finding things out because they feared that the information being made available was not accessible.

One issue cited frequently by interviewees was the inadequacy of HR support for the change process. Too many staff with the necessary experience and expertise left the organisation at the very point when that experience was most needed. Consequently, delays occurred in important transactional processes such as new contracts, changed terms and conditions, redeployment and so on. Promises made to managers that *"we won't start with gaps"* could not be kept and resilience was sacrificed in favour of savings. That problems persist with HR support is evidenced in particular by vacancy levels in

Occupational Health, which at the time of the review were said to be at around 50 per cent. Occupational Health is a vital resource to help the organisation adjust to new structures and processes, providing support to new working practices and an outlet for dealing with workplace stress. If it is not fully staffed this may jeopardise further progress and the difficulties arising from vacancies (which may relate to 'rate for the job' issues) need to be addressed.

The existing level of reserves – some £87 million – represents both a threat and an opportunity. The opportunities are obvious, especially in financing some of the costs of change, funding capital investment and supporting the PCCs' policing priorities. But the reserve levels may tempt the Home Office to reduce the degree of financial support provided through the grant regime. They may also help a new PCC bankroll a decision to dismantle elements of the amalgamation of policing provision. It is therefore vital that the PCCs and chief constables agree a detailed proposal for application of the reserves and make whatever commitments are appropriate in this respect as they reduce the projected level of combined reserves to approximately £20 million by 2018.

The PCCs should prepare for different electoral scenarios and formulate a contingency plan for likely changes in the external and internal environments, notably the general election scheduled for 2015 and PCC elections in 2016. (It is also possible that the referendum on independence for Scotland, to be held in September 2014, may have implications for English and Welsh forces.)

Structural issues

The next phase is not about 'crashing' two organisations together and gradually assessing what works and what needs amendment, but systematically preparing for the next comprehensive spending review, which will demand much more painful cost reductions. Warwickshire has previously peered over a financial precipice and had embarked upon radical change prior to the Alliance, whereas West Mercia has achieved substantial gains by 'plucking the low hanging fruit'. As everyone acknowledges, future savings will be considerably harder to secure. Structural change alone cannot deliver cost savings or real benefits – streamlining units and systems will bring gains only at the margins of what is required. Primarily, structural changes should reflect the need for greater efficiency and effectiveness and enable decision-making to be more timely and less risk-averse. But, as mentioned earlier, the work to date has been hampered by the lack of a comprehensive and robust analysis of demand across the four counties, both explicit (eg, calls for service) and unmet demand in fields such as human trafficking and cyber-enabled crime, which often fail to come to light in conventional ways. Under the heading of structural issues to address we highlight:

- Regional arrangements
- Protective Services
- Threats to partnership work
- Internal structure – anomalies

Regional arrangements

Regional arrangements function effectively – Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs), confidential units etc – but the Alliance lacks

traction in the collective 'grab' for resources. Tasking is chaired by an ACC from West Midlands Police and, because resources are allocated according to risk and priorities, the West Midlands area – and in particular Birmingham – gets the 'lion's share'. (This is not a criticism, simply a statement of fact.) Governance is very weak, in part because working relationships among PCCs need strengthening. The Central Motorways Policing Group (CMPG) almost certainly represents poor value – around one-third of its cost is consumed by overheads (it has its own performance, finance, HR etc) and it focuses too much on motoring offences or automatic number place recognition tasking for the National Crime Agency (NCA). In the past it has been criticised for its weak performance framework and inadequate prioritisation, and has struggled to demonstrate value for money. In addition, some concerns have been expressed that forces may be 'hiding' some of their own costs in CMPG.

Protective Services

Across the range of protective services – major crime, Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP), specialist operations etc – West Mercia had built up its service levels to a gold standard and was almost certainly over-provisioned in relation to demand, whereas Warwickshire had stripped provision right back to dangerous levels and relied heavily on officers wearing two or three hats to meet demand. Bringing the two functions together under one ACC has allowed some rebalancing and offers both an appropriate general level of resourcing and value for money. But three areas merit review, namely:

- pressures on key aspects of Protective Services – for example, the anticipated steep increase in demands upon PVP, while the high-tech units are under-resourced and cannot cope with demand (eg, for forensic examination of computers) such that enormous backlogs build up which pose major risks to public safety and reputation;
- the management structure of the Operations department, where one superintendent has around 600 people under his command; and
- whether there is a continuing need for two surveillance teams.

Both PCCs articulate a clear vision about 'protecting the front line' and preserving local identities. But despite the adoption of *protecting people from harm* as a principal aim, a worrying chasm exists around how protective services operate and why their work will rarely be mentioned by members of the public, who tend to see only visible, accessible policing (ie, bobbies on beats) as important. Without a strong local narrative on some of the critical issues that sit below the public radar – and which carry the greatest reputational risk – it is possible that choices about priorities and allocation of scare resources may not be as well informed as they should be.

Threats to partnership work

The austerity regime applies across much of the public sector, with local authorities being especially challenged to reduce expenditure. Whenever councils need to impose cuts they focus, for obvious reasons, on discretionary services rather than those underpinned by statutory requirements. This will have implications for policing if – or more likely when – councils seek to 'shunt' some of the costs incurred onto their partners and/or simply stop doing certain

work. Examples of police-related vulnerable services include whole swathes of community safety partnership work, CCTV monitoring, youth services, some aspects of road safety/traffic management, support for victims of domestic abuse and trading standards enforcement. The PCCs are alert to this vulnerability but the determination to respond effectively is hindered by the 'patchwork quilt' of community safety partnerships at county, unitary and district level across four counties.

Internal structure – anomalies

Finally, we have identified two internal structure issues that may be viewed as anomalous. First, the Professional Standards Department (PSD) does not sit comfortably in the Enabling Services Directorate, as the arrangement requires the Head of PSD to report to two bosses. This breaches a core principle of single lines of accountability and should be resolved by putting the PSD within the bailiwick of a DCC. The argument that much of PSD's work generates learning and intelligence on policies and processes that Enabling Services can best feed back into the organisation is not persuasive. Second, Finance and Enabling Services are separate directorates whereas in many similar-sized forces they would more typically operate as one.

Going forward: strengthening and deepening the Alliance

Leadership and the executive team

As noted earlier, the Alliance benefits enormously from a chief officer team with significant experience and expertise gained in diverse policing environments, balancing urban and rural settings and with a good mix of major crime and other specialisms. However, the workload across the executive team is not equitable and it is vital that roles and responsibilities are reviewed to bring a better balance. At the same time an investment in team-building would be beneficial. Some appetite evidently exists for a greater degree of visibility of the forces' leadership and the PCCs. While geography is a constraining factor, efforts should be made to adopt more 'management by walkabout'. But of greater concern going forward is the unresolved dilemma about the number of posts and the degree of duplication among the four chief and deputy chief constables.

When the current PCCs were elected the two forces had embarked upon extensive collaboration and indeed were moving cautiously in the direction of a merger, but this is now described as being 'off the table'. West Mercia would be content to unify the Alliance under one chief constable but Warwickshire's PCC is committed to retaining a chief constable for his county for the foreseeable future. Both PCCs are strongly committed to independence and express a wish to 'take politics out of policing'. While it is of course possible to be non-partisan – steering clear of party political standpoints – the key decisions which fall to PCCs entail choices about the allocation of scarce public resources and are

thus intrinsically political. In the absence of party political influences, decisions can be driven solely by the 'best interests' test, doing what is right for local communities.

It is argued that neither PCC has a democratic mandate to unify the leadership under one chief constable and a deputy chief constable. (And not just because the percentage of West Mercia and Warwickshire residents who actually cast their vote for the respective PCCs is in single figures.) Some decisions needed to progress the Strategic Alliance – for example, the location of the single control room – could become highly contentious if opened up to public debate and/or a referendum. The role of both PCC and chief constable would quickly become impossible if a mandate was seen as necessary to underpin every major decision. Perhaps the closest thing to a democratic mandate for the shape of policing in Warwickshire was the general approval secured during consultation in 2006 for a merger with neighbouring forces, in the face of overwhelming evidence that the force would no longer be viable as a self-sustaining police entity.

What then are the options for the PCCs as they look ahead to an electoral platform in 2016? Going into the campaign with a status quo position of two PCCs, two CCs and two DCCs is of course one option, but likely to be criticised in some quarters as an expensive fudge. An election manifesto that pledges streamlining leadership – with limited public debate or understanding of the issues – would be a gift to opponents. So if a more streamlined leadership model is to be pursued that stops short of merger[4] it needs to

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4   Interestingly, the Home Affairs Select Committee report *Police and Crime Commissioners: Progress to date* (May 2014) expressed support for the Alliance and concluded that "Where such alliances prove successful and supported by the public, we believe there is a case for facilitating the full merger of forces under a single PCC and chief constable".

be settled prior to the election, perhaps following a public consultation exercise that states the benefits accrued by the Alliance to date and makes the business case for and against a single chief constable to lead both Warwickshire and West Mercia. The level of public support can undoubtedly be influenced by the strength of the business case and the way that the issues are framed.

Accountability and governance

Interview evidence collected for this review highlighted some key weaknesses and gaps in the governance framework and work is under way to address these. A reliable body of evidence exists on good governance principles for public bodies suggesting that a revamped framework should help the PCCs to:

- be clear about the organisation's purpose and ensure the provision of high quality, cost-effective services;
- clarify the responsibilities of those charged with governance roles;
- put organisational values into practice;
- ensure rigorous and transparent decision-making and effective risk management; and
- take an active, planned approach to dialogue with, and accountability to, the public and institutional stakeholders/partners.

The PCC and Deputy PCC for Warwickshire have expressed a wish to see more 'embedded governance', reflecting the old police authority technique of posting a Police Authority member on key management and policy groups and setting up committees or working groups, for example, which mirror force structures. This may or may not be

desirable; it increases the risk that those tasked initially with a governance role get drawn into operations and management, becoming so complicit in decision-making that the scope for objective oversight is seriously compromised. But even if it were possible to embed governance it is almost certainly not feasible, because the PCCs do not have the resources to post themselves and/or their staff across the myriad structure of policy – and decision-making *fora* that exist in the Alliance. To maximise the delivery of effective policing all four key players – the two PCCs and the chief constables – must know exactly what is going on and that all key matters are minuted and recorded for defensive purposes. The PCCs must grasp the importance of governance at this level – it cannot be delegated.

Accountability across the Alliance is weakened by the current *ad hoc* nature of meetings between PCCs and chief officers. Meetings between the two PCCs and two chief constables should be placed on a regular formal, minuted basis to avoid any suggestion that business is being conducted on the basis of a 'gentleman's agreement' approach, and to ensure transparency. It would also be helpful if the two PCCs and Deputy PCCs met regularly as a foursome with their respective Chief Executives present. This could facilitate the intention to make the operation of the two offices more coherent and streamlined and improve the translation from policy into practice. Overall, governance and accountability would benefit from a restatement of key principles and a re-design of decision-making architecture, spelling out where key decisions will be made and formalising through protocols the bases of delegated powers. Such protocols could also encompass guidance on consultation and confidentiality so that parties to policy formulation

and options for decisions are clear about what can be communicated and when.

However the governance arrangements are enhanced and streamlined, the PCCs should address, head on, the issue of how to reconcile the 69:31 resource split with the current 50:50 division of governance responsibilities. If the rationale is not clear now, the Alliance becomes vulnerable to future challenges.

Accountability for operational and financial matters should be better integrated, exploiting the benefit of the Joint Treasurer and Director of Finance roles – which, unusually, span both forces – and that of the Joint Audit Committee. Together these structures present many opportunities to scrutinise key value for money issues. Consideration should be given to the creation of a 'star chamber' or equivalent – a high level forum with a sharp focus on the 'big ticket' items in the budget. It would probe in a structured way questions such as *"Why do we undertake this activity? Could we get the same or better results for less? How should this activity/function change in coming years?"*.

PCCs need to understand whether or not service standards are rising or falling and should therefore require from chief officers relevant performance information presented in an accessible and timely manner. The PCC role needs to home in on the critical issues – *"Are we delivering what we set out to deliver? Are we getting good value from our resources? Are our officers and staff deployed according to threat and risk?"* for example. In other words, PCCs need to be more intrusive and proactive, and the two newly appointed chief executives clearly understand their role in supporting PCCs here. While a good working

relationship between PCC and the chief constable is important this should not be allowed to become too cosy – a degree of bite and challenge is essential if the chief is to be held to account.

The move away from a prescriptive targets regime was a welcome one and PCCs should continue to encourage the focus on protection from harm and the application of officer discretion. In conveying to local communities what has been achieved by the Strategic Alliance, chief officers and PCCs have commendably tried to home in upon outcomes rather than inputs. A mature evaluation should judge policing on the absence of crime rather than the response to it, but this requires a shift in both professional and public attitudes. PCCs can play a vital role in re-orienting the assessment of police performance by holding chief constables to account for prevention rather than reaction.

The introduction of community ambassadors has been an interesting and innovative approach to outreach and can claim a degree of success. It can be built upon but there needs to be greater clarity about the role and some scrutiny of how it is being discharged. In particular, ambassadors need to be very careful not to conflate answerability and accountability.

Efforts should be made to strengthen the work of the Police and Crime Panels. Legislation (the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011) points to a dual role of 'light touch' scrutiny of, and support to, PCCs, and as noted earlier it can be hard to strike an appropriate balance between challenge and support. The churn in membership is problematic and panels have very limited resources at their disposal to train members and exercise an effective scrutiny role. It is unclear

how amenable these issues are to improvement without changes in legislation, but some obvious steps could be taken. The PCCs could facilitate regular meetings with both Panel chairs and provide a forward plan of key decisions and supporting information. PCCs could also exploit the potential leverage of Panels in developing strategies for effective partnership work around crime reduction and prevention. The PCCs might also consider how they can strengthen the Panels' ability to exercise scrutiny, perhaps through funding for training programmes.

A linked issue is the need for PCCs to delineate more fully what they hope to achieve over and above police-specific goals. It is evident that both PCCs have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into their police commissioner role, representing their diverse communities and seeking to hold chief constables to account. But by their own admission much of the *'and Crime'* element of the PCC role has yet to receive the same attention. Victim care and commissioning strategies are still in their relative infancy but are now clearly on the agenda, and Police and Crime Panels could play a useful role in fleshing these out and helping in their delivery.

Culture and local identity

As work progressed to unify policies and processes a deliberate decision was made not to push culture change and try to reconcile these and other differences quickly – rather, the approach was to let a new culture emerge organically over time. Given the amount of change that had to be absorbed in the first two years of the Alliance this may well have been the right approach, but it is evident now that moving

forward will require more explicit consideration of key elements of organisational culture, such as:

- our vision – what is policing about?
- leadership styles;
- degrees of empowerment – getting the 'loose/tight' balance right; and
- inclusivity – breaking down barriers between sworn officers and police staff.

Chief officers and others have expressed a strong interest in pushing a more radical approach to culture change, moving on from the basic *developmental* model – small incremental steps to improve – and the *transitional* approach of rebuilding in a series of revisions , replacing 'what is' with new approaches. The desired model is *transformational*, a brave and challenging approach that is often prompted by major changes in the external environment. In the policing context these pressures include the financial strictures of the comprehensive spending review, implications of the Winsor reports[5], problems with the working of the criminal justice system and potential political changes that may flow from the General Election in 2015. A transformational change programme does not have a specified end point but is more akin to a leap into the unknown, and cannot be managed solely within linear, time-bound programme. Change occurs in four key areas:

- organisational vision;
- people – what skill sets are needed, how they relate to each other;
- the nature of the services delivered; and
- processes involved in the delivery of services.

It would without doubt be a major undertaking to embark upon a transformational change

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[5] The reports: *Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions – Part 1 Report* (March 2011) and *Independent Review of Police Officer and Staff Remuneration and Conditions – Final Report* (March 2012) were an outcome of an independent review into police pay and conditions conducted by Thomas P Winsor.

programme and it is understandable that a degree of trepidation accompanies these discussions. But it would reflect the need to think very differently about the nature of the policing demand confronting the Alliance and how it shapes its response. An opportunity exists in the shape of the single OCC to make a major impression on culture and mindset across the organisation. The significance for the Alliance moving forward of a single command and control facility covering all four counties cannot be overstated. In terms of technological capability it has long been possible for one facility to serve two or more forces; the stumbling block has been the strong cultural tradition that gave pre-eminence to a chief constable's command and control of resources. The OCC decision marks a break with this tradition and reflects the maturity of the dialogue between PCCs and chief officers about how to progress the Alliance.

Local identity is clearly seen as a key element of culture change, but does not seem to be under threat. Local policing is the building block, the platform on which everything else is based and the SNTs are largely unaffected by the Alliance (other than positively by being better supported). It is vital that PCCs in particular are clear on what is meant by 'local' and 'front-line' policing in the context of a rapidly changing environment; crime is increasingly not rooted in a physical place – streets, homes, parks etc – but in cyberspace. (This also casts further doubt upon the relevance to the public of branding and logos.)

At the same time methods of communication are changing – increasingly people obtain news and views via mechanisms such as the internet, Facebook, Twitter etc rather than newspapers or

meetings. In a consent-based policing system engagement is crucial in building public trust and confidence. Social media enables the police to engage better and to build relationships as well as to gather information and intelligence. It allows officers to respond in real time to incidents and can help forces demonstrate greater accountability and transparency. An online presence which is interactive, rather than one which simply provides information, can create a personal connection with users and promote positive attitudes. It is particularly useful for engaging with 'hard to reach' groups, reaching a different demographic from those (very few!) who traditionally attend public meetings; in particular, young people are much more likely to contact the police online. These issues could usefully be captured in a social media strategy specific to the Alliance.

Managing the change process

The success achieved in ensuring a 'business as usual' approach throughout the first phase of amalgamation is testament to the dedication, diligence and quality of the staff involved, but came at a cost. 'Change fatigue' is evident and some problems/mistakes are still being worked through. What lessons can be learned for the next phase of change, especially if the nature of change migrates from developmental/transitional to a fully transformational model?

Any organisation going through a change programme can benefit from the use of a tried and tested model to help navigate from A to B. One potentially helpful public sector management model identifies six structural concepts or elements which can be the building blocks of

reform, sometimes known as the three 'Ss' and three 'Ps', namely:

- Strategy
- Structure
- Systems – operational, HR, finance, etc
- People
- Performance
- Politics

This model is designed on principles of clarity and simplicity and its strengths lie in the unity of vision, coherence and its all-encompassing nature. The concept of strategy is the key component of the model as it 'drives' the other concepts including financial management. Another well-known approach is the McKinsey 7S model. This identifies the 'hard' components of strategy, structure and systems which can be directly influenced by management, and the 'soft', less tangible elements of shared values, staff, skills and style which are more influenced by culture. Each element must be aligned to achieve mutual reinforcement and the model helps in understanding how the various elements inter-relate as the organisation is transformed.

It may seem a statement of the obvious but managing a major business change programme that encompasses complex IT and other projects is not the core business of police forces, and they are thus most unlikely to possess the relevant skills, knowledge and experience needed to be successful in such endeavours. This fact must be at the forefront of decisions about how to resource the work and how to ensure effective governance that contains the necessary checks and balances. A robust programme management approach must be adhered to throughout, including techniques such as critical gateway

reviews, alongside a financial reporting system with an appropriate level of granularity to keep costs on track. It would be a good investment to provide formal training in change management to some senior officers and staff.

One of the cultural features of successful change management is honest reporting of progress that avoids optimistic, 'rose-tinted' briefings, lulling chief officers and PCCs into a false sense of security until disaster strikes. (One characteristic of traditional police culture has been that bad news does not travel upwards.) Staff can be encouraged to air doubts and concerns in a safe environment through techniques such as 'pre-mortems', which ask people *"If this new project/programme were to fail, what do you think would be the most likely causes of failure?"*.

Going forward there should be just one SRO, with one of the DCCs an obvious choice for this role. The SRO needs to be supported by a central programme team to drive the process on a 'whole organisation' basis, supported by new appointments – either temporary contracts or specialist consultants – with relevant experience and expertise. Such expenditure would be a good use of the reserves. A new Blueprint is needed in the shape of a detailed programme plan encompassing structure, governance, milestones, risk assessments and so on.

Officer and staff morale must remain a key consideration, given the change fatigue referred to above. This can be mitigated through more bottom-up engagement (we note that the recent HMIC report on achievement of savings was critical on this point), acknowledging feedback from staff, recognising good ideas and formulating a comprehensive plan for consulting the

workforce and partners as to how the Alliance will develop. Rather than telling the workforce what decisions have been made, managers can seek their buy in, minimising the resistance to change and providing a platform for success. Essential points for effective communication are: keep it simple, do not promise what cannot be delivered and avoid leakages about decisions before they have been confirmed and explained. It may be worth securing some expert support on developing and implementing a communications strategy to support transformational change.

A factor in bringing services together was the decision that for key processes one force's approach would be adopted for functions such as IT, finance, HR and duties management etc, across the Alliance. Inevitably, there was often an imperfect fit for practical or cultural reasons and some adaptation was needed. Such process evolution should be planned and prioritised to extract maximum benefit, and not allowed to happen organically on an ad hoc basis.

Going forward there should be an absolute commitment to anticipate vacancies and avoid, as far as is practicable, delays in filling them. Again, this is a legitimate use of reserves in support of the change process. A linked issue is business continuity, which ensures that major changes such as the move to a single command and control are conducted without disruption to services. For major, complex projects such as the OCC business continuity will require considerable investment in the shape of back-up systems, experienced staff and a degree of 'doubling up' of posts. While the resources are available to support business continuity, the need for it to be carefully planned and managed

should feature prominently in the overall change programme strategy.

In order to maintain momentum the PCCs should consider an initiative or gesture to help 'kick start' the next phase. An example would be an agreement that the two offices of the PCCs – led by the chief executives – will share resources or merge particular functions such as communications/PR. This would have the advantage of unifying the key messages of the two PCCs as well as sending a clear message to officers, staff and the public that the two PCCs are integrating some of their resources too. Publication of a single Police and Crime Plan (underpinned by a single strategic assessment) would also go some way towards 'strengthening and deepening' the Alliance.

As noted earlier, the Alliance would benefit from a strategic plan on how best to exploit the very favourable position afforded by the scale of the combined reserves. While absolutely *not* advocating a 'blank cheque' approach, a very strong case can be made to draw upon reserves specifically to support the change management programme – in particular, buying in expertise and backfilling to avoid gaps in service as changes are made to structures and processes.

Structural issues – form follows function

Before considering any element of structural change the first priority is to undertake a thorough, robust assessment of demand (risk, harm, threat) to identify where mismatches exist in relation to resource usage. This exercise, if conducted in a comprehensive and disciplined way, will highlight some areas/functions from

which resources can be trimmed or withdrawn altogether (including the rising number of non-crime incidents to which the police respond) as well as pinpointing unmet need. Most forces have undertaken exercises of this kind in recent years but with varying degrees of robustness – Staffordshire is cited as an example of one of the most intensive approaches. The best possible understanding of demand is needed to plan structures for the future and optimise resource allocation, and this needs to be treated as a standalone project, not a task grafted onto someone's day job. Staffordshire Police used external consultants to support the work and this may be a route to follow. Warwick Business School is currently conducting a major analysis on the factors driving police service delivery which may also be useful. The key players in the Alliance must identify and tackle weaknesses jointly – for example, in protecting vulnerable people – wherever they exist either functionally or geographically. This may require more flexibility and fluidity in how resources are brigaded.

A robust demand analysis may also identify scope for managing down the expectations of partners and the wider public by promoting prevention and self-policing. This could apply particularly in the field of cyber crime, where businesses and individuals must take more responsibility for protection against hacking by keeping security up to date, changing passwords regularly and so on. Prevention remains the poor relation of police work, with resources channelled predominantly into reaction and investigation after the fact. PCCs and chief officers could derive very substantial benefits for their communities if they more effectively championed prevention and self-help, through campaigns and public education

programmes as well as targeted training for public-facing officers.

Earlier we highlighted some problems and options under a heading of structural change, covering:

- Regional arrangements
- Protective Services
- Threats to partnership work
- Internal structure – anomalies

Regional arrangements

Regional collaboration is seen nationally as the appropriate response to major cross-border crime and some elements of protective services, and there is little appetite for a large-scale withdrawal from regional work, much of which functions very effectively. But this general satisfaction should not blinker the Alliance from looking critically at certain aspects of current collaboration. Everyone accepts that current governance arrangements are weak but is this simply to be tolerated, or are there ways of challenging it? One or two aspects of collaboration offer less value for money than others, with roads policing being the prime example and the ROCU coming under some scrutiny.

If there is little prospect of improvement in terms of both governance and operational returns on investment in the ROCU, it may be prudent to consider the Kent/Essex model on tackling serious and organised crime. (These forces are currently in talks with the Home Office to see whether they can withdraw from ROCU arrangements.) The Alliance should give serious thought to withdrawing from CMPG if it can demonstrate objectively that the investment (well over £1 million annually) could be better spent. It

might, for example, deploy 'mini task forces' to crime/harm hot spots, or alternatively adopt a version of the West Yorkshire approach, whereby a specialist roads policing team (Odyssey) targets major criminals operating across the area, to good effect. The business case for staying in the CMPG must be made convincingly in the face of strong counter-arguments for withdrawal on both financial and policing grounds – other areas of Protective Services have a strong argument for additional resources.

Protective Services

Everyone in West Mercia and Warwickshire is acutely aware that enduring financial pressures will make it ever more difficult to maintain current service levels, irrespective of improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. It is vital that, despite these pressures, PCCs and other public figures do not pander to populism by promising at all costs to 'protect the front line' or 'preserve visible policing'. Effective policing – protecting people and communities from harm – requires a balance between the work of neighbourhood teams and the range of specialist operations and investigation. Much vital policing is completely hidden from public view and in many instances must remain so. Internet-enabled crime in all its facets cannot be dealt with by uniformed officers on the beat and a high level of visible reassurance patrol will not maintain confidence if levels of serious crime and offences such as on-line paedophilia, ID theft and computer hacking go unchecked because Protective Services have been denuded.

A worrying aspect of the way that the public agenda across the four counties is conducted is an imbalance in this area – the importance of

Protective Services is not being well promoted, even though this aspect of policing carries the bulk of reputational risk. PCCs should strive to create and promote a compelling local narrative on serious and organised crime, and help raise public awareness of how citizens can best protect themselves against new crime threats such as cyber-crime and internet-enabled fraud. In relation to protecting the public from harm, further work could be done to give victims a stronger voice and improve their experience.

As resources contract, the need to review their allocation between different elements of policing becomes ever more critical, and there is an awareness of particular pressures upon PVP that must be addressed. Everyone acknowledges that PVP almost certainly will require more resources so there is an urgent need for a rapid consensus on where these resources will come from, and a plan to implement these decisions. Our attention was also drawn to the need for the management of the specialist operations department to be strengthened to create greater resilience at superintending and inspector ranks.

In looking for ways to strengthen elements of Protective Services in difficult financial circumstances, the Alliance should consider the viability of its two surveillance teams. Conventional surveillance is very people-intensive and thus a highly expensive resource. While it does still have a place in investigative work, much tracking of criminals' movements can now be done through computers and mobile phone tracking, or through open source information such as credit card transactions, ATM withdrawals – even the use of Ocado orders or Nectar cards. Calls for surveillance are often a stock request from Senior

Investigating Officers (SIOs) but there needs to be more challenge to them – asking first *"What exactly is your intelligence requirement?"* then responding to that in the most cost-efficient way.

Another potential source of additional funds for Protective Services is Project Athena, a major national network (although currently without 100 per cent sign-up) which will create a substantial, consolidated and accessible database of criminal and other Criminal Justice Service (CJS) records drawn from all of the constituent forces. It will speed up the process of investigation by making links between offences and offenders and should, over time, allow a reduction in IT staffing. It may be worth reviewing whether the spend on this project can be speeded up to release the benefits more quickly. And there are also analytical software programmes for improving data-sharing on organised crime groups, such as 'click-tech', and a crime group mapping tool being developed in Greater Manchester Police, which merit exploration.

Partnership work

The PCCs are very conscious of the pressures that their partners in community safety work are experiencing, which will only increase as financial cutbacks intensify. It may become necessary to establish criteria for joint work so that the Alliance can hold partners to account for retrenchment – the more willingness shown to take up any slack, the greater will be the temptation for councils and others to cost shunt.

Internal structure – anomalies

Professional Standards does not sit comfortably in the Enabling Services Directorate, primarily because this location requires the Head of PSD to report to two bosses. (The Director of Enabling Services can handle day-to-day management but not issues of professional corruption and the like.) This breaches a core principle of single lines of accountability and should be resolved by putting PSD within the bailiwick of a DCC. While there is merit currently in keeping Finance and Enabling Services as separate directorates because of the workload generated by merging processes and establishing new ways of working, a migration plan to a single directorate should be formulated once new processes and structures have bedded down. It is also worth noting that much of the Finance Directorate workload flows from the need to account for two organisations rather than one. Finance and accounting for a single organisation would be markedly simpler.

While sympathetic to the reality that estate strategies tend to work on the basis of decades rather than annual cycles, some further thought needs to be given to how 'surplus' properties are managed. Adhering to the adage that 'form follows function' means that sometimes decisions must be made to either leave properties empty or sell at a loss rather than shoehorning units into locations that do not meet the optimal operational requirement – an example being the move of intelligence teams to Rugby, which caused significant operational problems. The Joint Property Vehicle looks extremely promising and could provide a model for future provision of support services, but until it is up and running, any decisions to replicate the approach would be premature.

Throughout the interviews we invited views on whether the Alliance approach could be extended

beyond Warwickshire and West Mercia. Most respondents agreed that, while in theory it would be possible to bring a third force into the Alliance, practical and other difficulties make it an unattractive option that is best taken off the agenda completely for the foreseeable future. More benefit might be secured from taking on functions for non-police organisations, the obvious example being the dispatch function for a fire service. More calls for service to fire brigades emanate from road traffic accidents than from fires, so the learning curve for OCC operators would not be steep and the workload is relatively very small. Northamptonshire has gone some way down this road and may merit contact from PCCs to explore further.

A final point on structure relates to the possibility that some services may in future be outsourced, in line with the patterns followed by an increasing number of forces to create 'mixed economies'[6]. But whenever the question was posed in Warwickshire and West Mercia the stock response was 'not until we've squeezed every last efficiency from current arrangements'. The Alliance needs to be more proactive in exploring opportunities for contracting out – waiting until all existing pips have been squeezed is a recipe for inaction, as this counsel of perfection is rarely achieved.

Engaging with private contractors requires both time and specialist expertise, otherwise the likelihood is that resulting arrangements are more likely to favour contractors rather than the public purse. It is vital that preparatory work starts now, to identify options for outsourcing and if necessary to bring in relevant specialists in contract specification and tendering etc. Contract flexibility is critical – outsourcing must deliver

significant operational cost savings and ideally contracts should be let for short but renewable periods. This would allow the contracting body to alter the contract as appropriate at the completion of each contracted period. A major problem with outsourcing is that, while it may offer a reduction in overhead costs, the agency may become a 'captured consumer', totally reliant on the services provided by the outsource contractor or supplier. The power imbalance could then potentially grow over time in the supplier's favour, or even create a monopoly situation.

The most obvious areas for outsourcing include the transactional elements of HR and finance, such as payroll, recruitment and records management but too often efforts to combine with other forces in pursuit of economies of scale are stymied by a collective unwillingness to compromise over the lead role. In other words, forces see the benefits of grouping these functions in one contract but each wants the system adopted to be theirs, rather than cede ownership. The other potentially fruitful area for a degree of outsourcing/privatising is IT but a major stumbling block here is a lack of commonality in operating platforms and inadequate national directives to exploit economies of scale. Any pressure that PCCs and chief officers can exert to create a more beneficial environment for national IT solutions would be very worthwhile.

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[6] After much debate and resistance the near monopoly role of the Forensic Science Service was broken up in favour of competitive contracts and, without any loss of service quality, the police service bill for forensics dropped from £200 million to £130 million, with expectations of significant further reductions.

A new model of policing?

The economic recession, which began in late 2007, changed the fiscal landscape for policing and other public services, and ushered in an era of tight financial settlements that is expected to last up to a decade. (Some pessimistic predictions point to a halving of current spending power by 2020.) Forces are being pressed both to maintain officer numbers – for fear of a public backlash if swingeing cuts are made – and continue to deliver high quality services, including special programmes such as community policing, while budgets are reducing. To pull off this tricky balancing act, police managers are examining new and alternative approaches from a menu of options that include collaboration, regionalisation of some services, outsourcing, civilianisation and restructuring. Some see the task as a relentless, grinding search for efficiencies but others are keen to seize the opportunity presented by a changing climate to innovate, breaking away from conventional models of police service delivery. Difficult decisions about saying 'no' to certain non-priority demands on resources have more legitimacy when, metaphorically, backs are up against the wall. And extreme external pressures may help to overcome traditional, rather bureaucratic policing cultures characterised by inflexibility, lack of innovation and creativity and resistance to change.

The Strategic Alliance has, to some extent, a foot in both camps. It has delivered a raft of savings and efficiency gains through traditional methods but is not shying away from asking radical questions about how policing must change to meet the challenges of 'new' crimes, rising demand and shrinking resources. It is vital that the Alliance avoids an incremental approach to securing savings, resorting to historical strategies

of fine-tuning, streamlining, staffing cuts and 'salami slicing' the current structures and processes, which are too cemented in traditional silos. Instead, PCCs and chief officers should consider what shape the organisation needs to be in five years' time and beyond. Along with other forces, the Alliance will need to adapt its problem-oriented approach to policing in a world where geographic borders matter less and less, while a rapid and intelligent response to different patterns of criminality matters more and more. Supporting this more innovative thinking is a realisation of the limitations of the current measures of crime and police agency performance; a comprehensive, dynamic and flexible management and performance framework is required to adapt to any further changes in the operating environment.

A whole raft of work is now related to cyber-enabled crime – fraud, ID theft, hacking, child sex exploitation and so on – which often crosses borders (force and national) or ignores them altogether. An informed view is that the police service cannot simply enforce its way out of this problem because the threat is often neither geographically based nor responsive to conventional policing tactics. Increasingly, the response is through regional or national resources such as confidential units, ROCUs, the NCA and even GCHQ. Forces need to invest in skilled people who understand the cyber-crime business and how it can be tackled. These are not likely to be career detectives although, with a modicum of training, generalist officers (in the Criminal Investigation Department and SNTs) can do much of the work. Indeed, the government's cyber-security strategy requires forces to mainstream cyber awareness, capacity and

capability and improve their understanding of its scale and nature as well as their skills in dealing with it. The Home Affairs Select Committee report on e-crime recommends that forces set benchmarks to gauge whether such skills are improving. The Alliance could review current crime report forms to flag (if not already included) any digital connection/evidence relating to a crime, and thus enhance understanding of the scale and nature of the e-crime problem. Obviously there is a resource implication here so the Alliance must determine what it can reasonably deliver. Although the government has provided some additional funding, to do this work properly the Alliance would benefit from investment in a dedicated team to help shape thinking.

With a paucity of enforcement options available, prevention becomes ever more important but most police officers are ill-equipped to offer appropriate advice. Crime prevention is still stuck in 'bolts and locks' type of advice rather than protecting people's computers from botnets and other malware attacks, for example. A new policing model will almost certainly represent a huge cultural shift and require a very different and more diverse workforce. We will increasingly need not the '50-year old sweaty detective' but 20-plus year olds who have grown up using computers on a daily basis. In addition to cyber, the other marked change in criminal activity concerns fraud, which since the banking crisis has grown alarmingly and is now probably more damaging and costly than illicit drugs[7]. Using conventional CJS responses to combat fraud is untenable – it is both too expensive and often unsuccessful – so we need to gear up for a future where the police take much more responsibility, with PCCs, for developing new approaches to prevent and tackle fraud (including cyber-enabled fraud).

Across England and Wales forces have embarked upon a range of change programmes which could be described as 'new policing models' but commonalities are difficult to discern other than the acknowledgement that there is no 'silver bullet' magically transforming the core business. Design and implementation of new approaches is part trial and error, part act of faith and a huge dose of hard work. But one factor that does feature in some of the more successful developments concerns integration with other agencies to tackle a small number of highly chaotic and costly problem families which consume a significant degree of resources for all the agencies involved. This phenomenon is not by any means a new revelation but, over the last decade or more, the responses have continued to be isolated and atomised with a principal goal of referring the problems on. But success can come only from integrated multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams that share information about, and co-ordinate triaged responses to, troubled families and individuals. Leading edge practice here emphasises the need to create a public sector ethos in which relationships, trust, integrity and a holistic approach to the family can flourish. Typically, each troubled family is allocated a key worker who engages with the whole family to generate sustainable changes in behaviour. In working closely with the local authority and other agencies addressing troubled families, effective policing focuses in particular on preventive strategies around domestic abuse.

Consideration about changing models of policing can be informed by asking three basic questions,

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[7] Lancashire Constabulary estimate an increase in reported fraud of almost 200 per cent since the onset of the recession.

not dissimilar to the 'must/should/could' tests applied in the early Blueprint:

- **What are the activities we must always undertake?** These would include Protective Services, some crime investigation and a degree of neighbourhood policing.

- **Which areas of policing demand are diminishing?** Examples include burglary and motor vehicle crime. Violent crime in the conventional sense of public disorder and assault is also falling,[8] but the police are increasingly drawn into the more opaque world of internet-related bullying and harassment such as trolls. The police may also benefit from criteria to assist decision-making on how best to respond to non-crime incidents, especially around nuisance and antisocial behaviour which stops short of the criminal threshold, where demand is rising as other agencies react predictably to budget pressures by cutting back on services.

- **Where do we need to invest to meet rising demand?** Cybercrime in all its manifestations and fraud are the most obvious examples, along with elements of the PVP agenda, especially around sexual offences and child and domestic abuse. Vulnerability may merit explicit inclusion in the threat/risk/harm matrix.

PCCs and forces can and often do conduct robust analyses of this kind but may struggle to balance them against public concerns, which may be ill-informed (ie, lacking an evidence base or founded on expectations that the police will respond to matters which are not within their locus). This poses a dilemma when it comes to allocating resources to national security threats, which is why the government publishes the annual Strategic Policing Requirement. Does the Alliance conduct an annual evidence-based assessment of national threats as part of its Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment?

It is important to ensure clarity of purpose going forward – what is the Alliance's shared vision/purpose? The Alliance could become a beacon of best practice in delivering cutting edge, 'fleet-of-foot' policing services that places harm reduction at the core of its business, whoever it affects and wherever it occurs. But PCCs need to convey confidence that this is the direction they wish to pursue, and communicate it effectively. The question *"What is the end game?"* has to be answered convincingly, given that many officers and staff consider that the two forces have effectively merged already. Key questions posed in this context include *"What does fair policing look like?"*. This will assume increasing importance following HMIC's recent announcement that it will conduct annual inspections of every force based around three criteria – efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy. All forces will need to consider how they measure and improve police trust and legitimacy with 'fair policing' being a core component here.

PCCs should prepare for different electoral scenarios, notably the General Election scheduled for 2015 and PCC elections in 2016 and formulate a contingency plan for likely changes in the external and internal environments. (It is also possible that the referendum on independence for Scotland, to be held in September 2014, may require a response from English and Welsh forces.) The most radical structural change would

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[8] Although considerable resources are now absorbed by alcohol-related offending, especially where a thriving night-time economy exists, and it is fair to ask whether more of these costs should be borne by pubs, clubs and drinks manufacturers.

of course be a full merger of the two forces. The current Home Office position is understood to be to support and facilitate voluntary mergers but not to impose them; this may change if the 2015 general election produces a Labour government as the party now favours fewer, larger forces[9].

Warwickshire's PCC has expressed strong opposition to a merger, believing that the county's population values its force and the role that the force and chief constable play in local identity. In addition, his preference is for small rather than large-scale entities and he worries that a merger would impact negatively on force morale. But whatever the strength of feeling against a merger there is an argument for some objective analysis – what is the business case for and against a merger? What would be the financial implications of a full merger, bearing in mind that the framework for the current collaboration (notably, the 69:31 resourcing split) is quite complex? Nationally, talk of mergers will not go away, with some considerations either bubbling up from forces on the brink of non-viability or filtering down from governmental recognition that 43 forces cannot be sustained going forward. It is surely better to anticipate the continuing debate and secure a position for Warwickshire and West Mercia that meets all relevant criteria for value for money and resilient, effective policing.

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9 At the ACPO conference in June 2014 various speakers predicted that in some areas the required budgetary cuts can only be managed through a merger process.
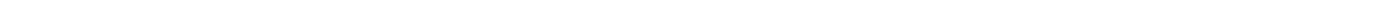
Glossary

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
CC	Chief Constable
CMPG	Central Motorways Policing Group
DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
NCA	National Crime Agency
OCC	Operations and Communications Centre
PCC	Police and Crime Commissioner
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PSD	Professional Standards Department
PVP	Protecting Vulnerable People
ROCU	Regional Organised Crime Unit
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
SNT	Safer Neighbourhood Team
SRO	Senior Responsible Officer