

**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary  
South of England Region**

**Follow-up Visit to Swindon BCU  
Wiltshire Constabulary**

**BCU Inspection Conducted – April 2007**

**Follow-up Visit Conducted – December 2007**



## **Introduction**

The original inspection took place in April 2007 and the team was made up of the BCU inspection team, HMIC Southern Region and supported by other staff officers. In total the report contained five recommendations and highlighted a number of areas for management consideration, but also found some examples of good practice.

## **Methodology**

The re-inspection consisted of focus groups of constables and sergeants (both uniform and detectives) individual interviews with members of the senior management team (SMT) and those managers whose remit included areas of responsibility affected by the original recommendations. A divisional performance meeting was also attended. The BCU was in the process of changing commander and as a result the current commander was unavailable at the time of the re-inspection. As previously, the inspection team received the support of the senior management team (SMT) and staff were friendly, open and honest. Very useful pre-read material was provided by the BCU in advance.

## **Summary**

The challenges facing Swindon BCU continue to be considerable but staff on the BCU have responded very positively to the recommendations contained in the original report. The inspection team found that there was a genuine enthusiasm to improve and the SMT have made good inroads to improving performance and introducing a performance culture. It is accepted that there is still more to be done but Swindon BCU has made some really impressive progress, which is examined in greater detail below. BCU performance on burglary dwelling is excellent and on vehicle crime, while crime increased slightly, in terms of sanction detections it is outstanding.

The staff focus groups revealed that officers now consider that performance is the priority for the BCU, although some expressed reservations. This is indicative of the change process that the BCU has had to undergo, but some officers would clearly like things to 'return to how they were'. Thus, it is important that the SMT maintains the impetus for change and continues to be supported by the Force; otherwise there remains a risk of regression back to old ways of working.

There are two areas upon which the SMT may wish to focus renewed attention and these are PDR completion, which is comparatively low at approximately 60%, and the absence rate of both police and police staff. At the time of the re-inspection police officers absence rate was 6.3 days and police staff 7.5 days, for the first two quarters against a target of 9 for the year.

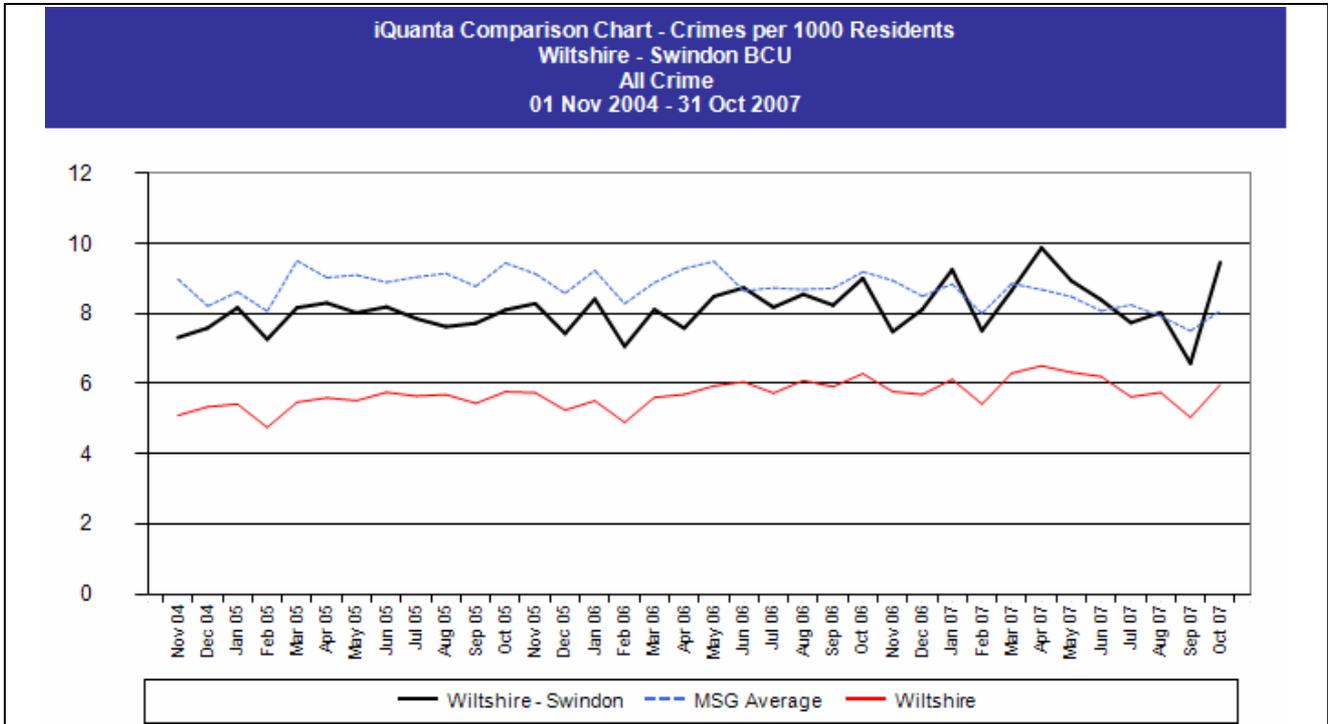
The BCU has some way to go before it can truly be claimed that a performance culture has been fully embedded and the SMT are cognisant of the fact the performance on violent crime needs to be improved, but much has been achieved in a relatively short period. The recommendations are listed below with details of outcomes thus far, accepting that some recommendations have more long-term aspects and as such are still 'work in progress'. However, it is considered that all recommendations have been appropriately dealt with and may be signed off.

**Swindon BCU**  
**Crime and Sanction Detection Performance**

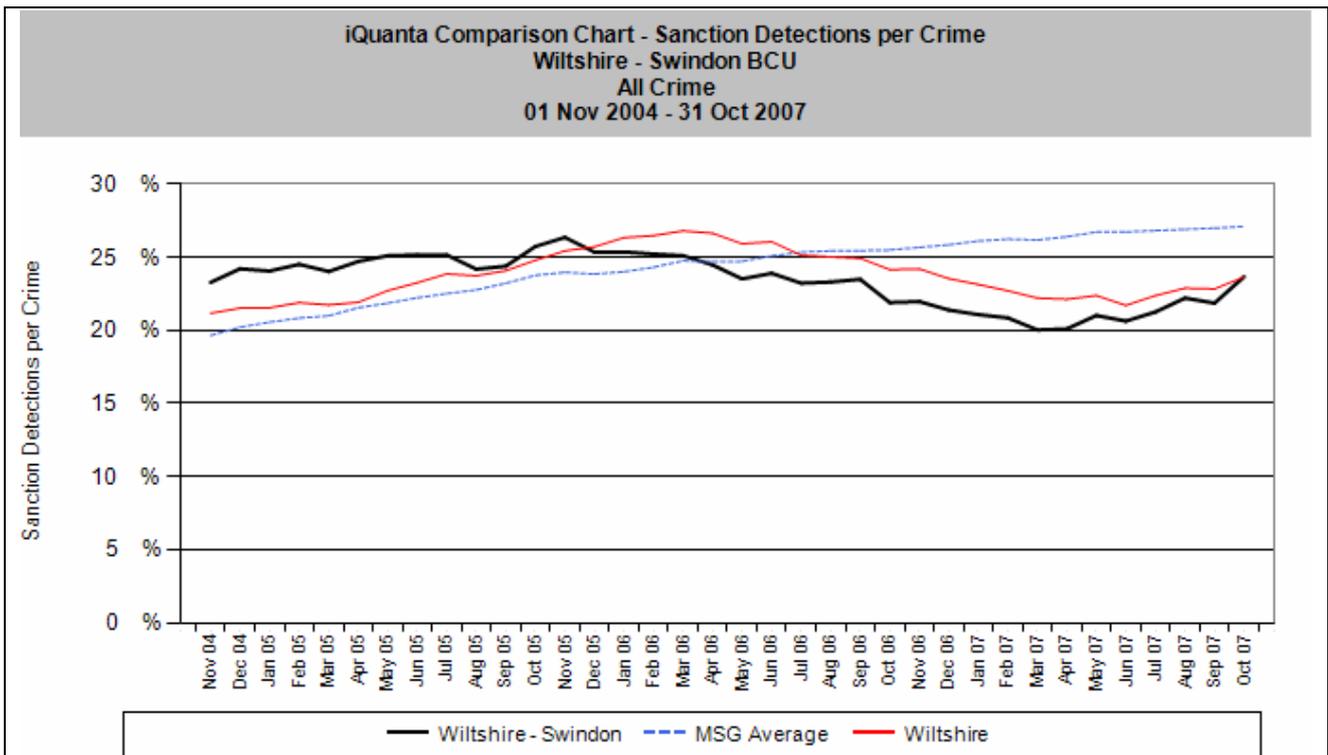
<b>Crime Levels and Sanction Detections</b>	<b>November 2005 to October 2006</b>	<b>November 2006 to October 2007</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Total recorded crime	18,301	18,665	<b>1.99%</b>
Number of crimes with a sanction detection	4,007	4,416	<b>10.21%</b>
% Crimes with a sanction detection	21.89%	23.66%	<b>1.76 %Pts</b>
Total recorded crime per 1,000 population	98.07	100.02	<b>1.99%</b>
Total residential burglary	807	710	<b>-12.02%</b>
Number of residential burglaries with a sanction detection	128	158	<b>23.44%</b>
% Residential burglaries with a sanction detection	15.86%	22.25%	<b>6.39 %Pts</b>
Total residential burglaries per 1,000 households	10.41	9.16	<b>-12.02%</b>
Total vehicle crime	2,214	2,269	<b>2.48%</b>
Number of vehicle crimes with a sanction detection	300	461	<b>53.67%</b>
% Vehicle crimes with a sanction detection	13.55%	20.32%	<b>6.77 %Pts</b>
Total vehicle crime per 1,000 population	11.86	12.16	<b>2.48%</b>
Total violent crime	3,540	3,746	<b>5.82%</b>
Number of violent crimes with a sanction detection	1,423	1,406	<b>-1.19%</b>
% Violent crimes with a sanction detection	40.20%	37.53%	<b>-2.66 %Pts</b>
Total violent crime per 1,000 population	18.97	20.07	<b>5.82%</b>
Total robbery	225	249	<b>10.67%</b>
Number of robberies with a sanction detection	24	59	<b>145.83%</b>
% Robberies with a sanction detection	10.67%	23.69%	<b>13.03 %Pts</b>
Total robbery per 1,000 population	1.21	1.33	<b>10.67%</b>

**Total Crime**

For the year November 2006 to October 2007 Swindon BCU has had a **1.99% increase** in the number of recorded crimes when compared to the previous year. Swindon is currently **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections of 3 and 6 months' data show all crime **decreasing slightly**; projection of 12 months' data shows the level of crime **increasing slightly**.

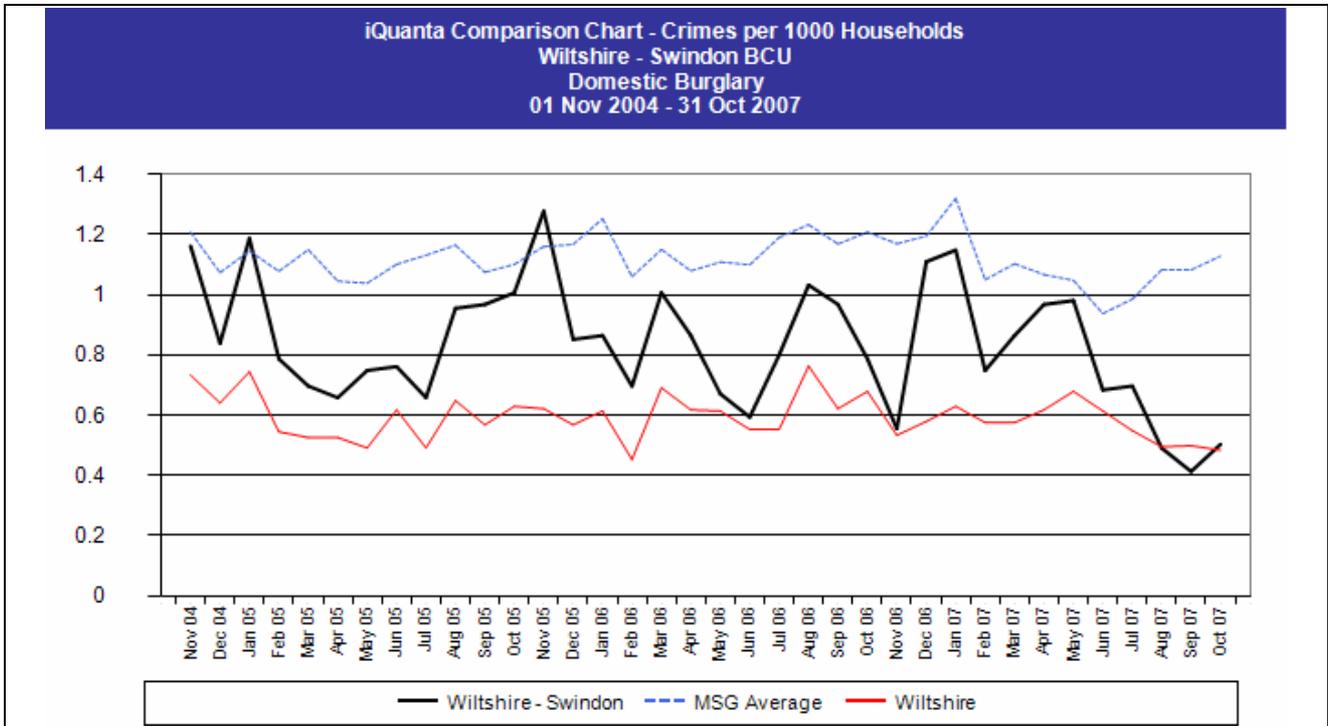


The sanction detection rate for the year November 2006 to October 2007 is **23.66%**, an **increase of 1.76%points** on the previous year. Currently Swindon is **below** the MSBCU average, and is the **worst in its group**. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months' data show the sanction detection rate **increasing**.

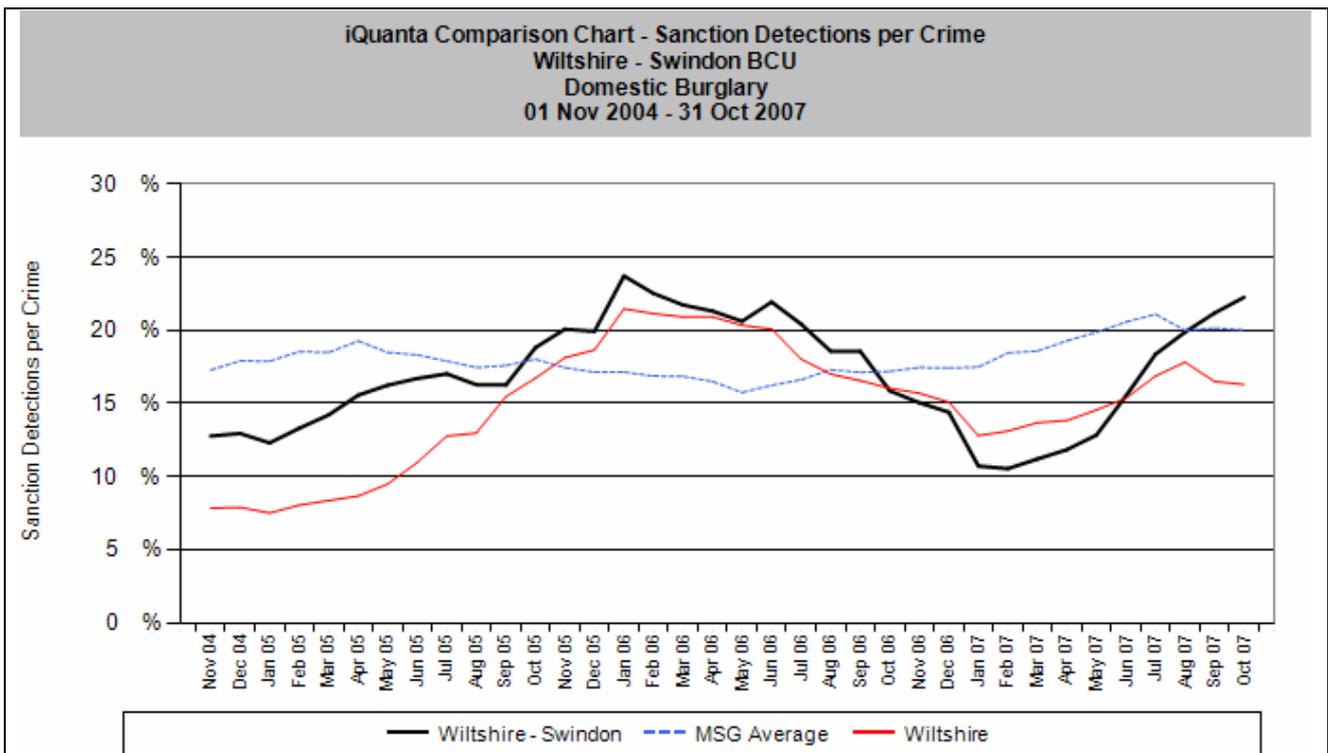


**Domestic Burglary**

For the year November 2006 to October 2007 Swindon BCU has had a **12.02% decrease** in the number of domestic burglaries recorded when compared to the previous year. Swindon is currently **below** the MSBCU average, and is the **best in its group**. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the number of burglaries **decreasing**; projection of 12 months' data shows burglaries **remaining near the current level**.

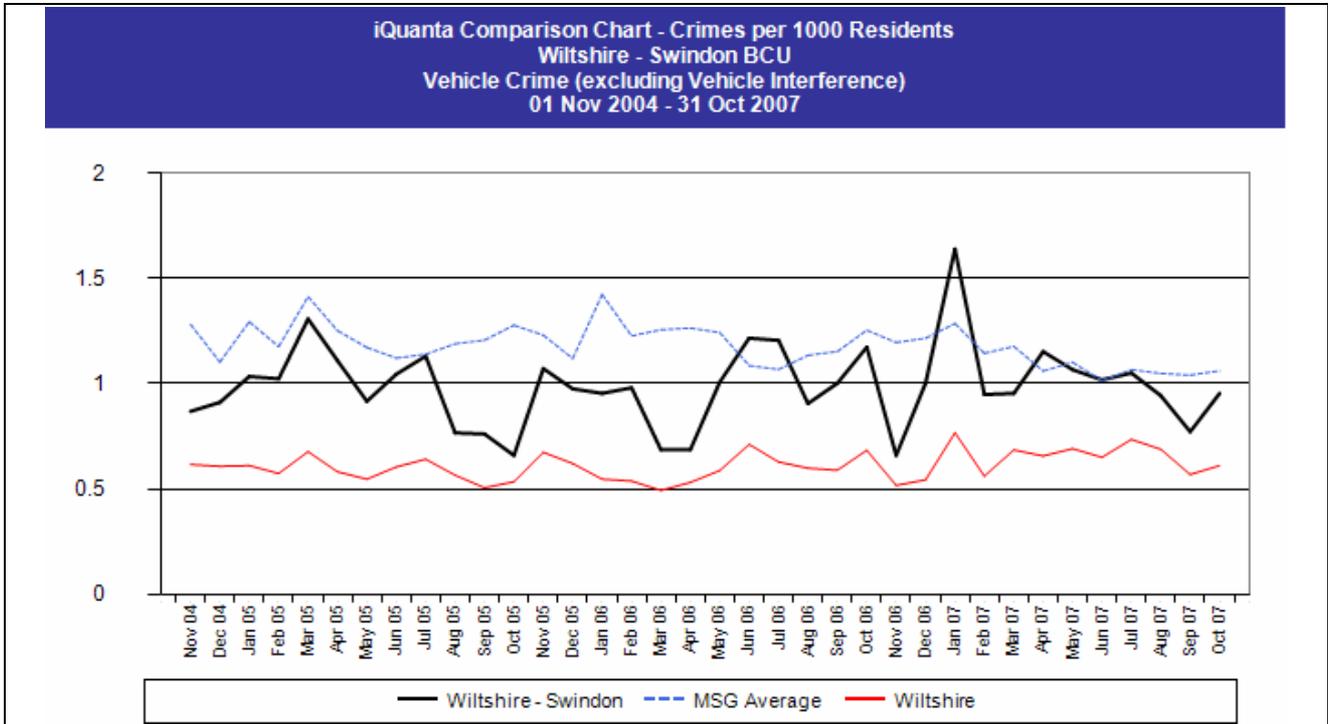


The sanction detection rate for the year November 2006 to October 2007 is **22.25%**, an **increase of 6.39%points** on the previous year. Currently Swindon is **in line with** the MSBCU average. All projections show the sanction detection rate **increasing**.

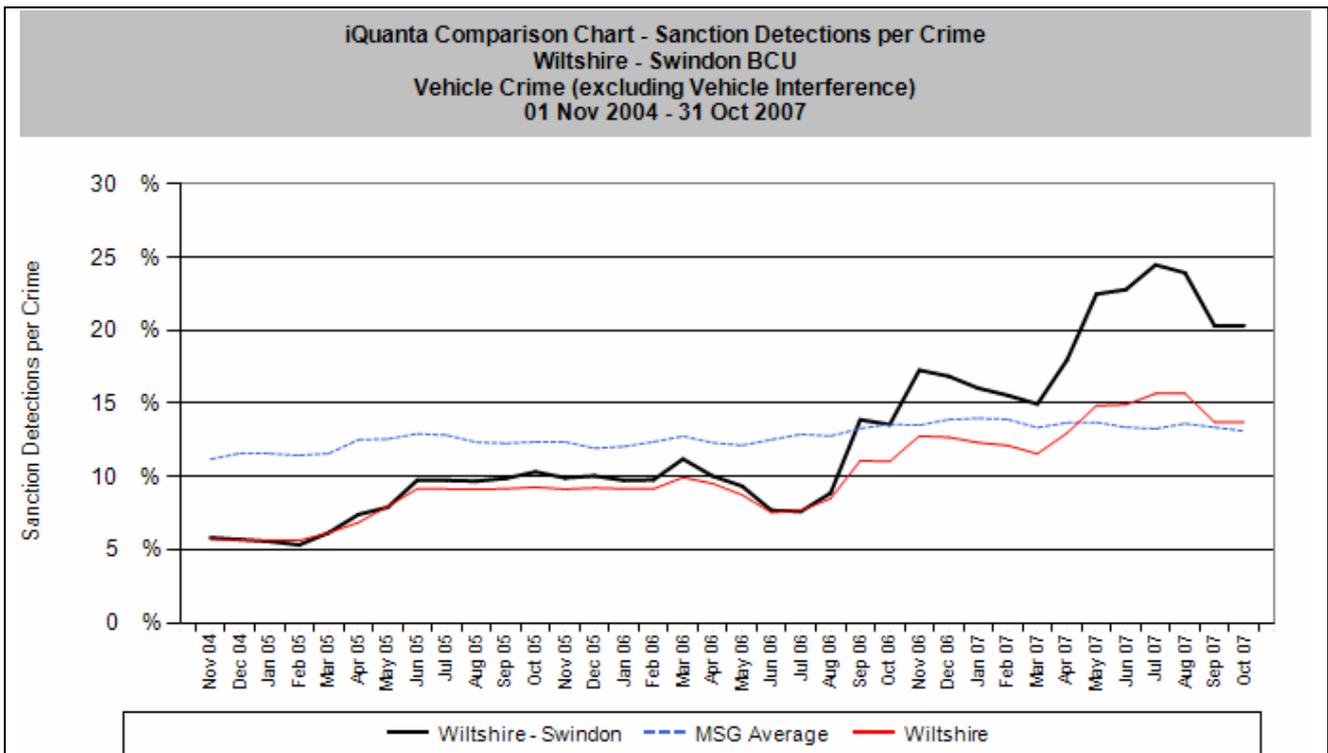


**Vehicle Crime**

For the year November 2006 to October 2007 Swindon BCU has had a **2.48% increase** in the number of vehicle crimes recorded when compared to the previous year. Swindon is currently **just below** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the number of vehicle crimes **decreasing**; 12 months' data shows vehicle crime **increasing**.

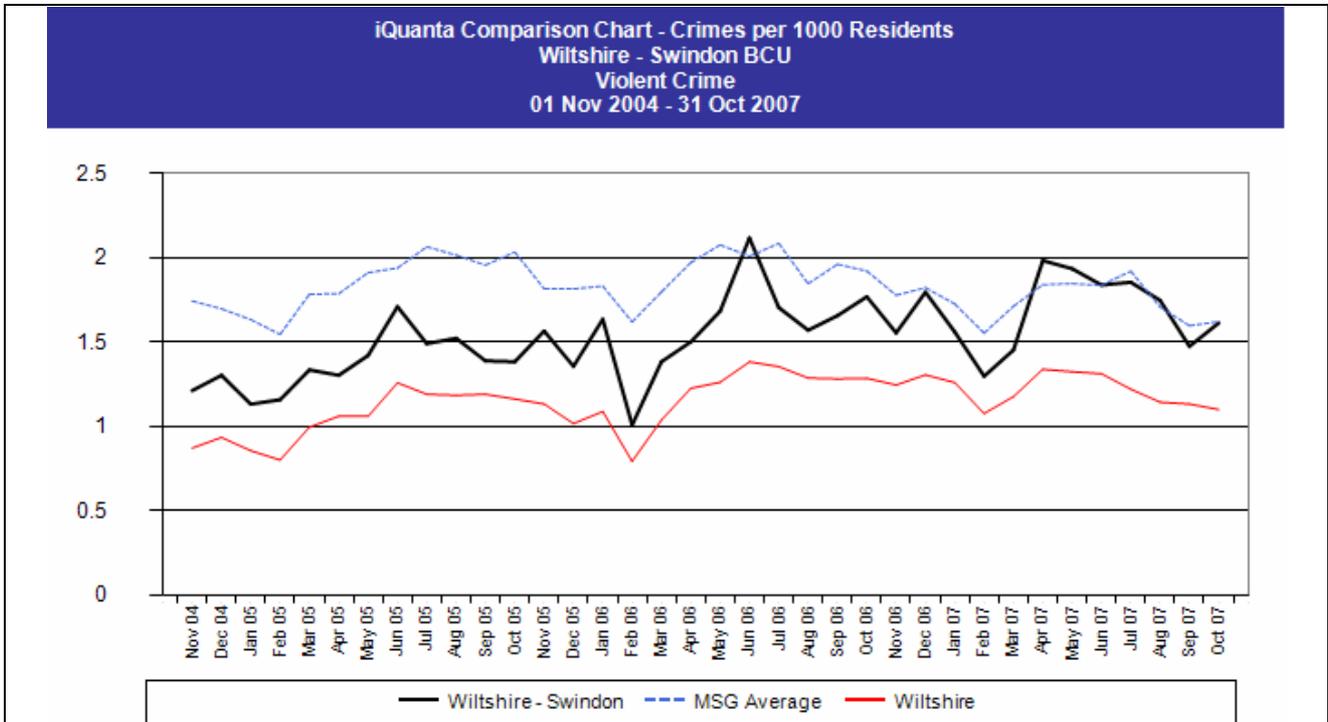


The sanction detection rate for the year November 2006 to October 2007 is **20.32%**, an **increase of 6.77%points** on the previous year. Currently Swindon is **above** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 12 months' data show the sanction detection rate **increasing**, but projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the sanction detection rate **decreasing**.

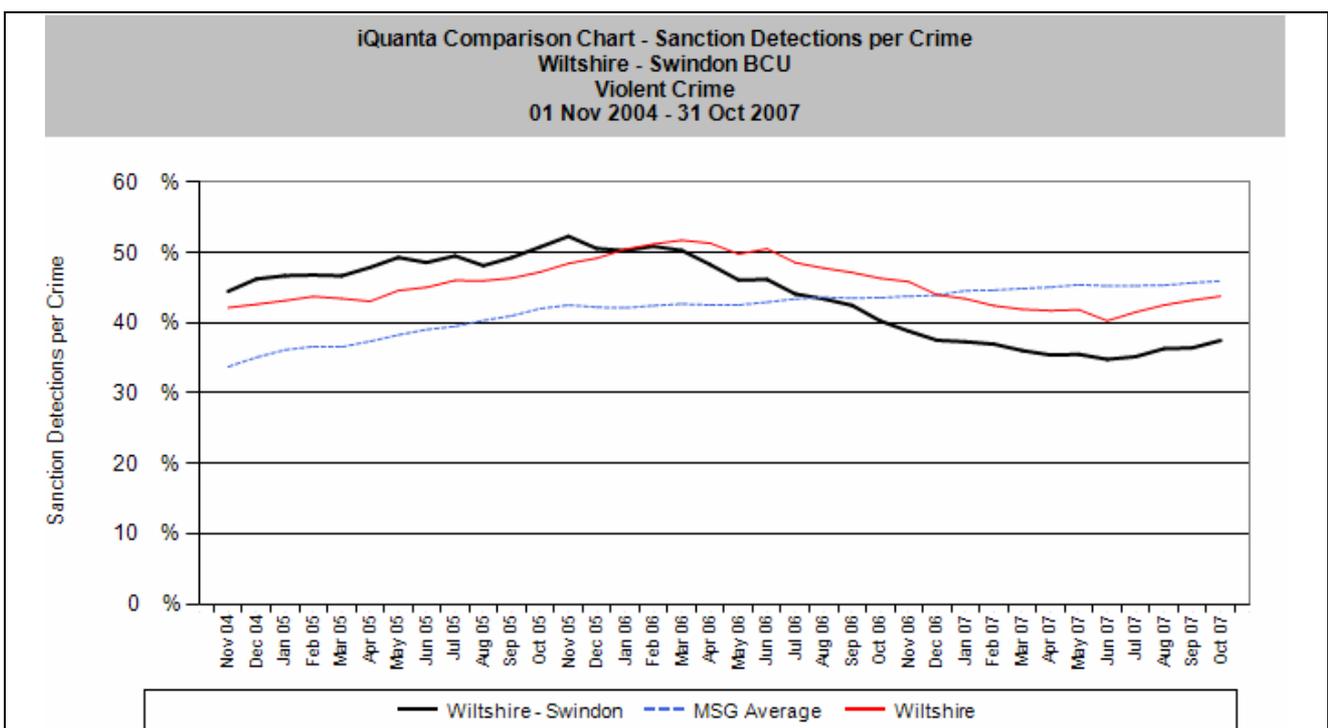


**Violent Crime**

For the year November 2006 to October 2007 Swindon BCU has had a **5.82% increase** in the number of violent crimes recorded when compared to the previous year. Swindon is currently **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 months’ data show violent crime **decreasing slightly**; 6 months’ projection shows violent crime **remaining at the current level**; and 12 months’ data show the number of violent crimes **increasing slightly**.

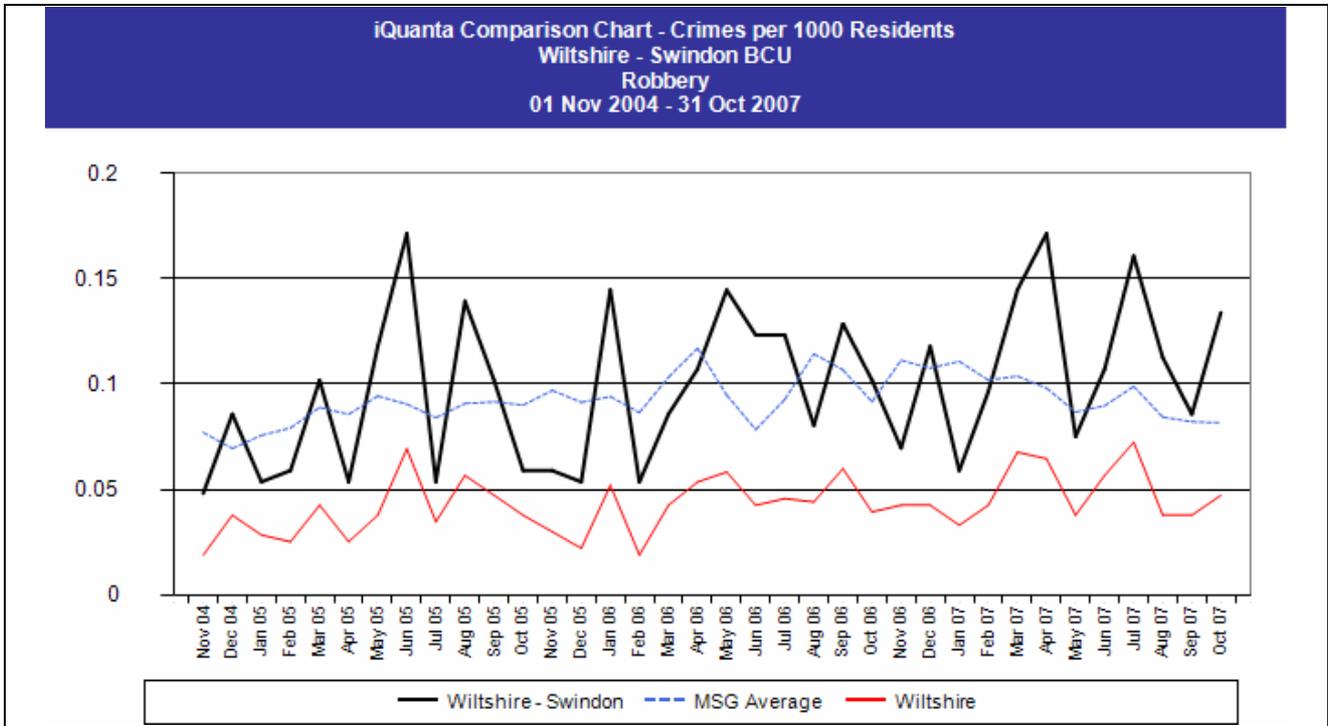


The sanction detection rate for the year November 2006 to October 2007 is **37.53%**, a **decrease of 2.66% points** on the previous year. Currently Swindon is **below** the MSBCU average, and is the **worst in its group**. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months’ data show the sanction detection rate **increasing slightly**.

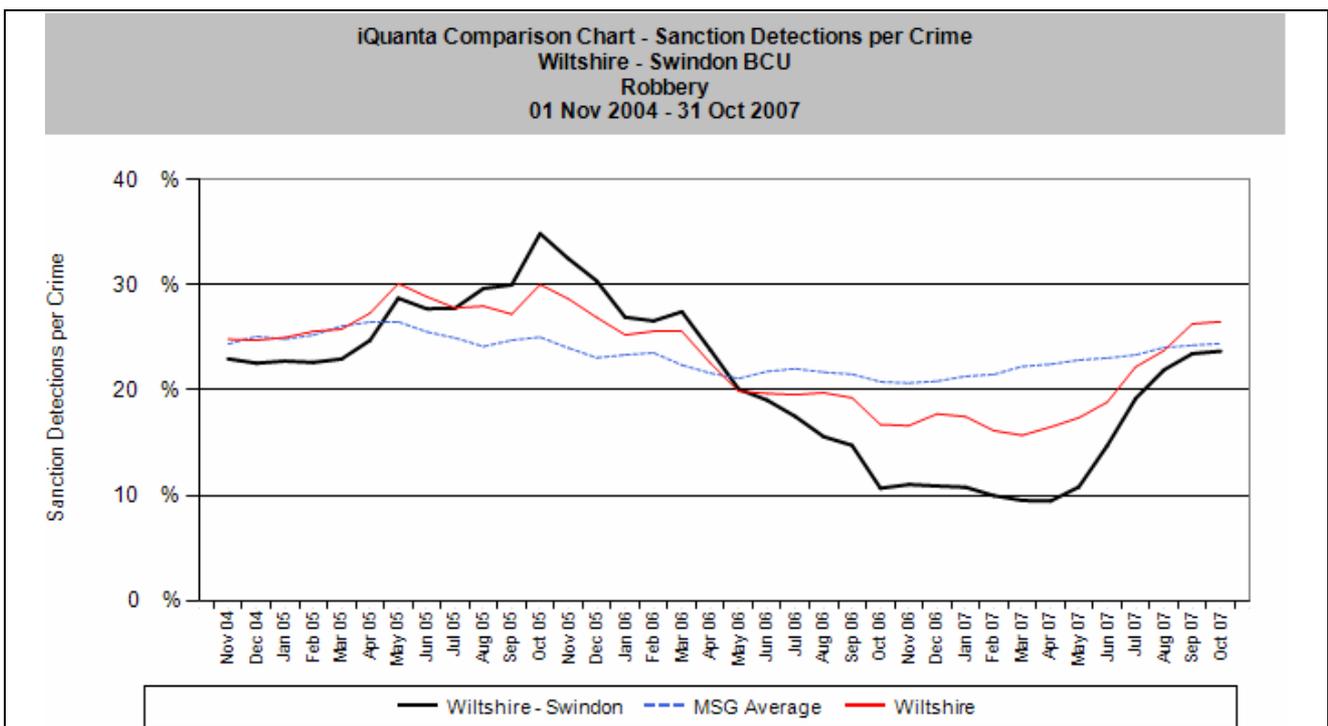


**Robbery**

For the year November 2006 to October 2007 Swindon BCU has had a **10.67% increase** in the number of robberies recorded when compared to the previous year. Swindon is currently **just above** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 6 and 12 months' data show the number of robberies **increasing slightly**; projections based on the last 3 months' data show robbery **decreasing slightly**.



The sanction detection rate for the year November 2006 to October 2007 is **23.69%**, an **increase of 13.03%points** on the previous year. Currently Swindon is **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months' data all show the sanction detection rate **increasing**.



## **Significant Developments Since the Original Inspection**

Since the inspection in April 2007 there have been a number of changes to the SMT. The chief inspector responsible for performance management has left and not been replaced. His work now comes within the portfolio of the business manager. The post holder for superintendent partnerships has been absent for sometime, his role being covered by a chief inspector. There have been changes in the posts of chief inspectors for neighbourhood policing and the operational portfolio.

The BCU was in the process of changing commander and as a result the current commander was unfortunately unavailable at the time of the re-inspection. The BCU as a whole continues to change and evolve in the face of continuing high demands but there were no other organisational or local changes that directly affected the BCU.

## **Recommendations and Outcomes**

### **Recommendation 1.**

*The SMT should further develop the crime management unit, supported by audit and scrutinising functions, to enable it to fully manage all crime on behalf of the BCU.*

Job descriptions have been evaluated and agreed for CMU investigators and scrutiny officers, and as a result a recruitment process has commenced. Agency staff have been brought in to release five police officers posts. An interim volume crime unit has been established using agency staff pending the result of a business case that has been submitted for consideration by the Chief Officer team.

The CMU has made a valuable contribution and when one considers the speed in which it was established, it is a testimony to the skill and energy of the manager responsible, and his staff. The BCU receives approximately 365 crimes per week and of these some 40% are routinely dealt with by the CMU. This represents a significant proportion of crimes that are no longer being passed to shift officers or neighbourhood teams. Staff have noticed the changes and were pleased that they had increased time to complete more in depth investigations into those crimes which they retained.

The area of crime performance that the SMT fully accepts needs improving is violent crime; particularly violence against the person, such as common assault and actual bodily harm. The inspection team found it reassuring at the BCU performance meeting that the problem was fully understood, analysis had taken place and a plan to rectify the situation had been formulated.

It is a matter for Wiltshire Constabulary to determine in which way this problem will be resolved – but resolved it must be. The detection rate for this category has seen a drop from 40% to a little over 37%, with a 6% overall increase. The BCU has put forward a business case for a volume crime unit (VCU), which would deal with gaps that have currently been identified, and have already established an interim unit. The inspection team have observed VCUs in other forces that were highly successful, and this would be a logical development of the CMU.

## Recommendation 2.

*The crime targeting team (CTT) should be restricted to dealing with priority crimes, and have clear leads for each within the unit. The SMT should review the detective establishment within the unit.*

The CTT are now more focused and are dealing with dwelling burglary, theft from vehicle and forensic conversions. In addition CTT are tasked in accordance with divisional T&CG meeting to other priority areas of crime as necessary. This is wholly appropriate. The interim VCU is intended to pick up violent crime and criminal damage investigations in the first instance. The town centre night time economy operation (Op Diamond) is now being staffed as a BCU responsibility, utilising all police officers on the BCU, with the result this minimises the requirement to abstract CTT staff from their primary function. The CID restructure has increased the establishment to four detectives.

The success of this approach can be seen in the BCU performance in terms of improvements in vehicle crime and burglary dwelling. The same could be achieved in violent crime if a permanent VCU is sanctioned.

## Recommendation 3.

*Swindon BCU must develop a performance regime that should contain the following elements:-*

- Establish clarity of ownership and responsibility for performance.
- Develop suitable performance measures for all teams/individuals. These should not be confined to merely detections but encompass a ‘balanced score card’ of performance measures (e.g. intelligence submissions sickness/absence rates).
- Develop a series of dual flow performance management meetings that are linked, down to inspector or equivalent level, enabling individuals to be held to account for delivery on performance.
- Continue to develop PB views performance software; making clear to managers its potential by ensuring it provides simple, highly visible and regular information on current performance against priority targets.
- Maintain the emphasis on rewarding good work and the positive management interventions that currently occur, but ensure current processes are universally understood and used.
- PDRs have SMART objectives linked specifically to BCU priorities (suggest no more than three plus a development objective).
- Establishing an auditing regime to ensure compliance with recently introduced SOPs, investigation models, policies and procedures.
- Seek best practice on performance management from BCUs in the MSBCU group.
- Implementation plan for the above to be developed with clear timescales, which result in full adoption within six months.

A performance management framework has been developed and agreed by SMT. Performance indicators and targets are in place for teams, departments and sectors in the form of monthly statistics and team/department data. This includes sickness at

team level. A performance assessment tool (PAT) has been rolled out with all members of SMT, with most inspectors and sergeants having received training locally during the year. A draft detection strategy has been developed. The SMT have PDR objectives that include performance targets, and it is intended that this will be extended to all staff.

There is now a series of linked meetings which examine performance from the command team down to individual teams via the chief inspectors, and there have been distinct improvements in the quality and quantity of data that the BCU is able to retrieve from its IT systems. There is further work to be undertaken and developing a performance culture can take a considerable period of time, but the inspection team were impressed with what it found. Staff are now aware of the drive for improved performance, and it has been made clear what is expected of them. One officer described the changes as resulting in much better motivation from supervisors.

#### Recommendation 4.

*In the light of closures of front counter services elsewhere in the County, the current force project on contact management should further review front counter services. It is suggested that this should include:-*

- Ensuring resources and opening times are aligned to demand profiles.
- Consideration of whether administration and ancillary functions, which frequently call staff away from dealing with the public, could be dealt with elsewhere (e.g. dealing with post, taking miscellaneous telephone calls, etc.)
- Review of the front counter environment and layout and its impact on customer service (staff have to enter the visible area of the front counter to use the photocopying machine).
- Consideration to greater use of volunteers.

The force project around enquiry office services continues to progress, and has delivered a new model of enquiry office services. There are discussions at BCU level with the local authority to transfer town centre enquiry office services to a shared one-stop shop facility. A new post of customer relations' manager has been created on the BCU and recruitment is underway. Opening hours have been reduced but not as drastically as originally feared and this is an area of business that the Force continues to have under review.

#### Recommendation 5.

*The BCU should consider ways of increasing police presence during busy periods, such as Operation Debus at Milton Keynes, and review abstractions. The use of the CTT for this function should be avoided.*

Operation Diamond has been established to increase the number of officers in the town centre on Friday and Saturday night. Starting from November 2007 this will include all police officers in Swindon, contributing to working at least two weekends in the town centre, with the intent on doubling numbers on the night time economy operation.

Operation Delivered, now Operation Ascend (force operation) was introduced to deal with outstanding crimes that had named suspects. The intention was not only to clear the unacceptable backlog but also to lend direct support to shift officers, who were predominately dealing with these crimes.

Some officers expressed disappointment that more officers from headquarter departments were not visible on these operations, and this is a matter that is being vigorously pursued by the ACC responsible.