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Warwickshire and West Mercia Police talk merger

Talks are taking place about a possible merger between Warwickshire and West Mercia Police, a chief constable has said.

Warwickshire's Andy Parker said the idea could include the introduction of a single chief overseeing both forces.

The two are already in a "strategic alliance" in a bid to save £30m.

But Warwickshire's Police and Crime Commissioner Ron Ball said there were no firm plans in place and nothing will happen before 2016.

"A merger is one of several options we will continue to discuss," Mr Parker told BBC Coventry and Warwickshire.

"Single leadership is something also that we should consider as perhaps the next step within the strategic alliance, but in doing any of this we need to engage with the public and clearly the PCC is the big power in making decisions on those sort of issues."

'Emotional preference'

Mr Ball said no formal plans are in place and stressed there will be no merger during his term of office.

He also said he had an "emotional preference" for smaller forces.

The West Mercia and Warwickshire forces agreed to form an alliance back in June 2011 in order to meet the challenge of reducing policing budgets.

At the time the forces stressed their identities would be retained.

West Mercia's chief constable David Shaw said there were "no firm plans" for a merger.

Mr Shaw said: "As we go through this period of change and while we are facing more cuts, we are just saying what the future might hold. This could be continuing with the strategic alliance, through to, potentially, a merger, and everything in between."

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