

Briefing paper - Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people

Purpose of document

'Policing in the 21st century' is a consultative white paper that sets the Government's vision for policing. Responses are relevant to the legislation in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill to be considered before the bill's introduction in Autumn 2010 and for future policy development.

Consultation starts on 26 July 2010 and ends on 20 September 2010 (8 weeks)

Summary

'A radical shift in power and control away from government back to people and communities' is stated as the heart of the document.

Therein, it is acknowledged that crime is still too high, that many people still suffer high levels of anti-social behavior and only half of the public have confidence the issues that matter are being dealt with.

Key Proposals

The proposals are laid out in four main sections, each followed by a series of consultation questions. These proposals are listed below and summarised in the sections that follow:

Increasing democratic accountability by:

- Abolition of Police Authorities
- Directly elected *Police and Crime Commissioners*. First election due May 2012

Removing bureaucratic accountability by:

- Removal of central targets and performance management
- Reducing bureaucracy and form filling

A national framework for efficient local policing by:

- Better value for money in local policing
- Collaboration between forces
- Introduction of a new National Crime Agency

Tackling crime together by:

- Encouraging people to get involved
- Radical criminal justice system reform
- Removing unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy for partnerships

Increasing Democratic Accountability

The white paper sets out proposals to increase democratic accountability as follows:

- By 2012, the public will have elected Police and Crime Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels

- The abolition of Police Authorities
- Providing information to the public – such as information about crime, antisocial behaviour and value for money
- A more independent HMIC (inspectorate)

Directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners

Police and Crime Commissioners will be representatives of the public in policing. Their mandate will be to represent and engage with the public, set local policing priorities, agree a local strategic plan, hold the Chief Constable to account, set the force budget and precept, appoint the Chief Constable and where necessary dismiss the Chief Constable. The Government wants candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, from political parties and independents.

Police and Crime Panels

Police and Crime Panels will provide an overview role at Force level for Police and Crime Commissioners, on behalf of the public. They will be made up of locally elected councillors from constituent wards and independent and lay members. They will hold confirmation hearings for the post of Chief Constable and be able to hold confirmation hearings for other appointments made by the Commissioner to his staff, but without having the power of veto. However, they will have a power to trigger a referendum on the policing precept recommended by the commissioner.

The paper suggests that although police authorities have worked hard to engage with their communities, they remain too invisible to the public.

Removing Bureaucratic Accountability

Based on the premise that only 11 per cent of the police are visibly available to the public at any one time, there is an intention to reduce bureaucracy. The Government will continue to set strategic direction for the police but will take no role in telling the police how to do their job.

- It is proposed that the reduction in bureaucratic accountability is achieved by:
 - Removing Government targets, centralised performance management and
 - Reducing the data burden placed on forces.
 - Reducing bureaucracy and supporting professional responsibility and cutting
 - Red-tape. This includes a number of measures being considered:
 - Cutting down on form filling and paperwork for police officers
 - Reducing the guidance sent from the centre
 - Scrapping the “Stop” form
 - Reviewing the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) and Police Criminal Evidence Act (PACE)
 - Reforming health and safety practices
 - Ensuring that the leaders of the service take responsibility for keeping bureaucracy to a minimum at force level.

A national framework for efficient local policing

The Government wants forces to find new ways of working together to get the best value from their resources. The paper uses the term “Golden thread” to describe the link between local, neighbourhood, to protective services to international policing. The paper proposes that the national framework should be achieved by:

- Better value for money for local policing by ensuring sufficient officers are available at the times when needed most. Additionally a review of remuneration and conditions of service.
- Better collaboration between forces – to include sharing back-office and support functions.

A new National Crime Agency (NCA)

It is proposed that the NCA will lead the fight against organised crime and for the protection of our borders. It will use the capabilities of the existing Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and connect these capabilities to those within the police service, HM Revenue and Customs, the UK Border Agency and a range of other criminal justice partners. The agency will be led by a senior Chief Constable and encompass a number of ‘commands’, including:

Organised crime - responsible for improving what we know about the threat from organised crime; providing effective national tasking and coordination; and ensuring law enforcement activity takes place against more organised criminals at reduced cost.

Border policing – responsible for coordinating and tasking border enforcement operational staff, working to a national strategy, including an assessment of risks and priorities.

The agency may also take responsibility for other national policing functions, including some of those presently carried out by the National Policing Improvement Agency, which will be phased out. The agency will be subject to robust governance arrangements, which will link to the role played by Police and Crime Commissioners.

Tackling crime together

There is support for partnership working throughout the paper and proposals for how the whole criminal justice system should work together to reduce crime. This includes a range of ways for the public to get involved. These measures will contribute to the implementation of the Big Society.

Later this year, a new crime strategy will be published, which will set out in greater detail how the approach to preventing and reducing crime will be reshaped in the Big Society.

The paper proposes how crime can be tackled in partnership in these areas:

The Government wants to see more special constables and explore new ideas to help unlock the potential of police volunteers in the workforce, for example as police 'reservists'. They are a clear manifestation of the Big Society in action.

Enabling and encouraging people to get involved and mobilizing neighbourhood activists:

There are proposals for a range of ways that citizens can get involved and making it easier to access the police and report crime and anti-social behaviour. A cost-effective way of establishing the number '101' as a single national police non-emergency number for reporting crime and anti-social behaviour will be looked into.

A radical CJS reform strategy, including:

- Police reform (as set out in this white paper)
- Sentencing reform
- A new approach to the rehabilitation of offenders
- Reviewing the prison estate's contribution to rehabilitation and reducing re-offending and developing a prison capacity strategy

Removing unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy in partnership working:

The Government believes that these Community Safety Partnerships and other partnerships have played a strong role in preventing crime and want them to continue to do so. They propose to repeal some of the regulations for CSPs and leave the helpful core statutory duty on those key partners to work together, so that CSPs will have the flexibility to decide how best to deliver for their communities. They are considering creating enabling powers to bring together CSPs at the force level to deal with force-wide community safety issues and giving commissioners a role in commissioning community safety work.