

## Conservative Party Policing Reform

### **Driver – Political,**

Related Drivers – Anti-Social Behaviour, Neighbourhood Policing, Increasing Accountability, Reducing Bureaucracy, Organised Crime, Counter Terrorism, Collaborative Working Between Police Forces, Efficiency, Public Perceptions of Crime, Public Perceptions of the Police, Mobile Technology, Police Mergers, Youth Crime

### **Background**

A general election in 2010 could bring the Conservative Party to power and a raft of new policing proposals. '*Policing for the People*' is the Conservative Party interim report from the party's police reform taskforce. The report is not a statement of Conservative Party policy, which has yet to be agreed but they are currently seeking views on the proposals from police officers, experts and the public. The paper suggests key reforms are need to the following areas:

- Force structure
- Workforce Modernisation
- Reducing Bureaucracy
- Accountability<sup>1</sup>

### ***Force Structure***

The report suggests that the structure of the police needs to be changed. It argues that neither a national police force, regional forces or the status quo are viable models of policing for the future. But proposes two models based on the current 43 forces that it suggests would be viable, these being:

- Locally accountable forces, with stronger local accountability, matched with effective leadership from the centre to drive collaboration, ensuring both the development of community policing and an enhanced ability to deal with serious crime.
- **Local forces focusing on level 1 crime**, with a new **Serious Crime Force (SCF)**, assuming responsibilities for most of the protective services currently delivered by the 43 forces, in particular serious and organised crime and major crime.

The report also suggests that a national Serious Crime Force could also:

- Lead or support major incidents, civil contingencies and major public order incidents
- Utilise its large pool of officers by sending them into any area needing assistance with a major incident or crime

- Incorporate the Serious Organised Crime Agency and deal with all cross-border and organised criminality
- Deal with counter-terrorism
- If a Serious Crime Force did not have the remit of dealing with counter-terrorism, that this should be dealt with by a separate counter-terrorist force or agency.

## ***Workforce Modernisation***

The report suggests that the police workforce reform to ensure it is flexible, well-trained and highly motivated, with a diverse range of skills and expertise; and that forces provide value for money. The paper discusses several different areas in relation to workforce reform, including recruitment, training, leadership and promotion.

Some of the proposals put forward for discussion in the paper include:

- The creation of a **new rank of senior constable**, with better pay than the rank of constable and be open to officers who have acquired the accredited skills necessary to deal with the additional responsibilities. It is suggested that this would be an alternative career path to taking up a leadership or management post.
- Keeping the technical examination in OSPRE 1, but replacing the OSPRE 2 procedure, possibly by an in-force selection process.
- The setting of **minimum national training standards**. The taskforce does comment that chief officers continue to have some discretion over training but be required to adhere to the minimum national standards.
- **Improving senior officer training and selection** at the police leadership academy by offering clear procedures and methods in leadership, with a combination of guidance, theory and doctrine of leadership being part of their career development.
- Creating a **national cadre of senior officers**, which would include all those of ACPO rank, and possibly superintendents (so that BCU commanders are included) who can be deployed across forces and responsibilities.
- Allowing experienced and skilled professionals to enter a police force at a rank above constable, provided that they can demonstrate the necessary skills that that the police require.

## ***Reducing Bureaucracy***

The report calls for a reform of the system which it comments 'ties the police's hands'. It suggests that forms and process which do not help the police to deliver a better service to the public should be eliminated. Central direction and targets are to be replaced by locally accountable leadership and priority setting. Specific proposals include:

- Scrapping the 'stop and account' form

- Returning charging discretion to the police for a wider range of minor offences
- Extending the police 'family' with a new cadre of part-time paid police reservists (PRO)
- Re-evaluating the business case for PCSOs, their performance and costs to ensure that they can be deployed effectively in the future
- Using volunteers to help to staff new types of community police stations
- Using commercial security firms for duties such as managing crime scene guarding, cordon duties, pursuing people who jump bail, monitoring 'at risk' prisoners and carrying out security checks.

It is proposed that the cadre of Police Reserve Officers (PROs) would:

- Be paid for their time and could also receive an annual income tax rebate
- Be required to work a set minimum number of hours each month, above the current 16 hours but ultimately at the discretion of chief constables
- Receive enhanced training across all forces, with new opportunities being provided to train on the job
- Be given expanded opportunities to specialise in different areas of policing and crime reduction as individual forces see fit
- Form an integral part of neighbourhood policing teams in the future
- Continue to be more representative of the community they serve than regular police officers and would appeal especially to younger recruits.

## ***Accountability***

The fourth key reform relates to police accountability for performance as well as for conduct. It calls for the police to be made more accountable to local communities at neighbourhood level, local command level, and at the strategic force level. It proposes:

- That elected police commissioners should replace police authorities with powers to appoint and dismiss chief constables, set targets, make policing plans and control budgets
- Replacing Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships with local community safety partnerships, who would be co-ordinated by, and answer to a locally elected commissioner
- Setting up an independent inspectorate to replace Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, which reports to Parliament instead of the Home Office. Its duties would include monitoring standards but also acting in part as an economic regulator.

The report calls for the scrapping of central targets for the police, stating that targets should be set locally and that police performance should be assessed against them using three simple factors:

- Crime reduction - measured by overall crime and supported by a weighted detection rate, though this will be given less importance [This would be the prime measure]
- How safe the general public feel - measured by robust and independently conducted attitudinal surveys
- How satisfied victims and witnesses are when they come into contact with the police - also measured by attitudinal surveys.

## **Potential Skills Needs**

**Communication skills** – effective communication between local partners and communities

**Collaborative working skills** – working effectively with colleagues within other forces and other law enforcement agencies

**Community policing skills** – to discuss and set local priorities and encourage more people to become involved in crime reduction alongside operational policing tasks

**Customer service skills** – delivering a consistent high quality service

**Inter-agency working skills** – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

**Management and leadership skills** – ensure accountability at all levels of the service

**Partnership working skills** – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

**Performance management skills** – manage performance and effectiveness against targets

**Strategic leadership skills** - to provide a clear vision and sense of purpose

**Victim and witness care skills** - to treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

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<sup>1</sup> [Herbert, N., Keeble, O., Burley, A., & Gibbs, B. \(2007\) \*Policing for the People: Interim report of the Police Reform Taskforce\*. London: TFP Group](#)