







Policing the Future: Continuity and Change

-  **Maximising investment in policing**
-  **Building trust**
-  **Increasing public confidence**
-  **Improving local accountability**



The Police Federation of England and Wales is the voice of the rank and file police service representing a total of 140,000 constables, sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors.

We understand that there are going to be some tough times ahead and some difficult financial decisions to be made but this must not result in the decimation of police officer numbers or a decline in the standard of service delivery.

The current state of policing

The additional demands placed on the police have left the basic but essential police functions of 24/7 response and non-specialist CID teams seriously over-stretched and under-resourced. This is all the more troubling considering the worrying trend in forces cutting back officer numbers. In the light of planned, large-scale events such as the Olympics that are rapidly approaching, where will the resources come from? Police officers that are fully trained, experienced and warranted cannot be instantly summoned into existence.

This issue must be addressed urgently if we are to avoid deterioration of service delivery. Here we make a number of recommendations on how, in a tough economic climate, the service can continue to meet the challenges of the modern era.

Maximising investment

1. What do you want us to do?: We have yet to see a model of policing that clarifies what is essential, what is desirable and what is an unaffordable luxury. Until this has been determined, valuable resources and ultimately tax-payers' money will continue to be poured into the wrong things. This has to be addressed, if not by a Royal Commission then by some co-ordinated, considered and robust research overseen by a respected, independent organisation. Whatever decisions are taken, the independent and impartial *Office of Constable* must remain at the heart of British policing.

2. Workforce mix – getting the balance right: The introduction of Community Support Officers was one of the most fundamental changes to the structure of



policing in recent years. They provide high visibility patrols in neighbourhoods, acting as additional 'eyes and ears' and reassuring the public. However in the current economic climate the question of whether this is the most effective use of public funds in delivering operational policing must be considered.

3. Bureaucracy: Whilst the bureaucratic processes within the police service have been under scrutiny, it is the bureaucratic process imposed by other parts of the criminal justice sector – most notably the Crown Prosecution Service – that continue to overburden officers. It is therefore vital that any review of bureaucracy takes into account partner agencies in the criminal justice sector so that processes become more harmonious.

We support the introduction of new technology if it is proven to assist with the working practices of officers but we also urge an audit of current equipment and IT systems to see how the existing technology that has been invested in could be used more effectively. We have been waiting for a national police computer system for over a decade. In the absence of this it is crucial that the multiple computer systems can 'talk to' each other, both within forces and between forces.

4. National procurement: Another area for cutting back on waste is procurement. We support national procurement if this can bring about economies of scale without compromising the operational independence of local forces. There is also much scope for improving the skills of senior officers when it comes to procurement and financial negotiations.

5. Collaboration: The Government's haphazard attempt at mandatory mergers a few years ago led to a great amount of wasted expense and was detrimental for policing. We can, however, see the logic of forces collaborating in the provision of some back office services, large-scale equipment (such as helicopters) and parts of infrastructure. When it comes to collaboration of policing teams, this should never be to the detriment of frontline service provision nor to the welfare of our officers. Any change must be undertaken with proper public consultation.



Trust, confidence and accountability

In terms of public trust, the police start from a relatively high position compared with other professions, but we are concerned that there are factors which threaten to undermine this confidence.

To the general public, the police are the most visible aspect of the criminal justice system but commonly lack the understanding of their role in that system. When it comes to court prosecutions and sentencing, the police have a limited contribution to make and frequently share the frustrations of the public and victims in particular, who feel they have not had justice done. We would like to see the issue of public accountability in other sectors of the criminal justice sector become as prominent as it is for police officers who are often held responsible for its failings.

Reoffending rates remain unacceptably high. We call upon the Home Office to address this fundamental problem, otherwise the police are simply wasting their time, arresting the same individuals over and over again. It is time for the reasons for reoffending to be understood and heed to be taken of any measures that are proven to have an impact.

It is absolutely correct that given the fact that police officers have the power to restrict the liberty of citizens that they should be accountable to the public for their actions and subject to scrutiny at all levels; this accountability is a strength of British policing. We are currently accountable to a large number of agencies purporting to represent the public interest including: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary; Independent Police Complaints Commission; National Policing Improvement Agency; Association of Chief Police Officers; Professional Standards Departments; Police Authorities and local scrutiny panels representing community issues.

We recognise how important it is that policing reflects the needs and priorities of the community it serves and that the public should have input into the way policing priorities are set. We suggest that this could be improved by developing better channels of communication so that each Basic Command Unit commander listens to the concerns of the local community and in turn explains to them why operational decisions are taken. Often the public have no knowledge of the other crucial 'non-visible' roles police officers perform.

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