

Police Reform White Paper

9 November 2004

Introduction

Published on 9 November, the Police Reform White Paper outlines how the government intends to further reform the police service. The paper details what they believe this reform would mean for the police, local people, local neighbourhoods and authorities. The white paper sets out its objectives as:

- ❑ the spread of neighbourhood policing for the 21st century to every community with improved police responsiveness and customer service;
- ❑ further modernisation of the police workforce to ensure that the service is fully equipped and able to deliver these changes;
- ❑ greater involvement of communities and citizens in determining how their communities are policed.

Key for local authorities is that the paper seeks to “*enhance the current role of councillors and local authority community safety officers to give them an explicit remit to provide a focal point for the local community in terms of dealing with those agencies responsible for community safety.*”

LGA key messages

- ❑ Giving councils and their communities more influence over local policing is a very welcome, but a long overdue step, towards restoring local democratic accountability to local public services, and reversing the impact of increasingly centralising approaches to public service delivery.
- ❑ The LGA’s recent manifesto for local communities “Independence, opportunity, trust” commits local councils to devolving power through the councils, to local people, communities and organisation. The emphasis on local councils as the focal point for the community in terms of community safety set out in the white paper’s proposals will make this devolution a reality.
- ❑ In order for these reforms to be successful the police must be more responsive and accountable to the needs of their communities.
- ❑ The white paper’s steps to empower Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs) and ensuring clearer lines of responsibility will not only enable resources to be targeted better, but also improve people’s overall experience of policing.
- ❑ As we have seen with the success of initiatives such as street wardens, local priorities can drive down local crime rates and help deliver on national targets. We welcome this focus on tackling issues locally.
- ❑ It is important to improve the effectiveness of police authorities. We want to see local authority members appointed to serve on them with the necessary expertise and knowledge of their communities’ safety issues in order for them to make the most effective contribution they can.

briefing

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Key proposals from each chapter impacting on Local Government

Chapter One: Building a better police service

This chapter sets out the Government's vision for the white paper, and sets out ten commitments to citizens including a commitment to ensure citizens know who their local police officer, community support officer and wardens are - and who is in charge locally, and have confidence that the police, local authorities and other agencies are working on their behalf in keeping their communities safe. It also:

- ❑ outlines the need for local authorities to exercise their community safety role by effective partnership work and more being done through education and social services to prevent crime, with the whole criminal justice system working together more coherently to catch convict and rehabilitate offenders;
- ❑ sets out a requirement on the police and other agencies to work directly with local people to identify problems that are most important to them;
- ❑ proposes a particular role within local authorities for 'advocates' to support the public and ensure their voice is heard on community safety issues; and
- ❑ proposes a new statutory Victims Code of Practice to improve the standard of service that victims of crime receive.

Chapter Two: More effective policing – the case for further reform

This chapter sets out progress to date on improving policing, why further reform is necessary and the shape that this reform should take. The key components impacting on local government, which are elaborated in later chapters, include:

- ❑ neighbourhood policing to increase the responsiveness and customer service of the police, with dedicated resources used to respond to neighbourhood issues. This aims to bring about engagement with local communities both to identify problems and to prioritise and shape solutions.
- ❑ community engagement to give people a greater say in determining local priorities, partly developing existing arrangements for engaging with local communities. Partnerships between local people and the police should raise people's confidence in and preparedness to help police locally.
- ❑ choice, excellence and equity is the government's approach to reforming how all services are delivered, driven by the user. For policing and community safety this is driven by the law-abiding citizen.

Chapter Three: A new relationship between the police and the public – building trust and confidence

This chapter sets out proposals to achieve accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, engendering a new culture of customer responsiveness and guaranteed standards of customer service with opportunities for local communities to have a say in local policing priorities. The key elements impacting on local councils are:

- ❑ a programme will be put in place to help forces implement neighbourhood policing and make sure that the highly skilled role of neighbourhood officers is recognised, valued and trained in the same way as other specialists within the police service.
- ❑ the roll-out of neighbourhood policing will be supported with substantial investment through the new Neighbourhood Policing Fund. We will deliver 25,000 community support officers and wardens by 2008.
- ❑ The white paper is clear that the neighbourhood level will not be prescribed in any given area, and that existing structures that councils already have in place that are working well should be used.
- ❑ A joint duty will be placed on the police and local authorities in each CDRP area to ensure they have sufficient arrangements in place to deliver a range of engagement opportunities for local neighbourhoods and to respond to concerns that are raised as a result.
- ❑ The following changes will be made to existing statutory arrangements:
 - extension of the responsibility on police authorities to secure the implementation of

a strategy to engage the community at all levels – including neighbourhoods – within the police area;

- a direct responsibility on the police in partnership with other bodies to put the strategy into place and to have arrangements to respond to neighbourhood level concerns; and

- a requirement for CDRPs to oversee the delivery of neighbourhood level priorities agreed with local communities. This may involve the routine establishment of joint tasking and co-ordination groups that are already in place in some areas.

- The white paper clearly recognises the role of councillors as the democratically elected advocates for their communities and representing the views of the public about the services they receive.
- This chapter also sets out the role for local area agreements to offer flexibility locally to achieve priority outcomes.
- The Home Office will work with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of the governments' local government strategy, to develop a range of ways in which ward councillors can be assisted to act as advocates.

Chapter Four: Building a new workforce

This chapter sets out proposals to modernize the police workforce to reinforce neighbourhood policing and citizen engagement, as well as increasing use of police staff to get officers back on the front line and maximize the use of community support officers.

- In preparation for the growth in Community Support Officer (CSO) numbers:
 - a minimum set of powers will be developed, on the basis of experience so far, which all CSOs need to possess to play a full part in neighbourhood policing. This will include enforcement powers such as the power to require a name and address, the power to confiscate alcohol and powers to issue fixed penalty notices;
 - forces will be empowered to be able to grant the power of detention to CSOs;
 - the Government will work with forces and Skills for Justice to develop role profiles linked to the national occupational standards. This will enable forces to match recruitment, training and development programmes to the work that CSOs perform;
 - national recruitment of CSOs will be developed. This will take into account pilots developed by the Metropolitan Police and others;
- There will be work with stakeholders to increase the number of and effectiveness of police service volunteers:
 - identify and share good practice in the recruitment, management, training and deployment of volunteers;
 - support recruitment and marketing efforts to better publicise police service volunteering roles and the personal development opportunities they give to local people and community groups;
 - investigate wider roles and specialist uses of volunteers; and
 - help forces to establish partnerships with businesses, encouraging businesses to support staff who volunteer with forces, in recognition of their added training and skills.
- A new duty will be placed on police authorities to promote diversity within the police force and authority.

Chapter Five: Ensuring effectiveness

This chapter sets out a clear national framework to support locally responsive policing.

Measures impacting on councils include:

- in police force areas which include unitary council areas only, each council should appoint its cabinet member with the responsibility for community safety to the police authority.
- police authorities, like police forces, should be subject to independent inspection in order to ensure public confidence.
- in terms of intervention powers the provisions of the Local Government Act 1999 Act will be broadened to cover the whole range of the police authority's obligations.

Chapter six sets out a summary of the key proposals in the white paper.

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