

# Media Release 234

168/04

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday 9 November 2004

POLICE REFORM IS VICTORY FOR COMMUNITIES OVER CENTRALISM, SAYS  
LGA

Giving councils and their communities more influence over local policing is a long overdue step in reversing decades of centralism and a major victory for the Local Government Association's campaign to restore local democratic accountability to public services, the association said in response to the police reform white paper out today.

Cllr Dame Sally Powell, chair of the LGA's Safer Communities Board, said: "The police need to be more responsive and accountable to the needs of their communities. I am delighted that this white paper recognises councils' role as community leaders and the part they have to play in ensuring more police resources are deployed on the issues that matter most to local people.

"Today also represents a major success for the LGA's recent manifesto for local communities, which challenges government and political parties to back radical devolution of power to local councils and their citizens.

"Since their introduction, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships have demonstrated that joint working between police, councils and other local agencies to tackle community safety issues is the right approach. But CDRPs are not accountable or transparent enough to their communities and local authorities need a much stronger leadership role.

"For too long, national policing priorities have taken priority over local ones. But as we have seen with the success of street wardens in driving down local crime rates, the success of central targets is predicated on that of local ones.

“More decisions about deployment should be put back into the hands of the community. Empowering CDRPs and ensuring clearer lines of responsibility will not only enable

[Contd.]

resources to be targeted better, but will improve people’s overall experience of policing too – the LGA intends to play its full part in the review of CDRPs outlined today.

With enhanced councillor representation proposed for police authorities, the LGA, alongside its partner body, the Association of Police Authorities, will be providing ministers with constructive advice on how improvements can be made at this level.

Cllr Powell added: “Police authorities must be made more effective too. We fully accept that the local authority members appointed to serve on them must have the necessary expertise and knowledge of their communities’ safety issues in order for them to make the most effective contribution they can.

“Today’s white paper poses a significant but exciting challenge to local government. The LGA continues to press national politicians to place more authority and trust in their local counterparts and I believe these police reforms, coupled with the recent announcements on licensing, indicate the government is starting to listen.

“We cannot be complacent however. Improvements both at police and local authority level are needed, but with the priorities right, this poses a huge opportunity for local government to radically improve its citizens’ confidence and trust not just in the management of their communities’ safety – but in the efficacy of local democracy itself.”

ENDS

MEDIA CONTACT: Andrea da Gama / John Harrison, media relations manager,  
LGA, on 0207 664 3333. Out of hours, please contact the press office pager on  
07659 146 658.