

**LGA/APA – POLICE REFORM
KEY AREAS FOR JOINT RESPONSE
PAPER BY THE APA**

Introduction

The following has been prepared by the APA and is based on key topics that were discussed at a meeting which took place between LGA and APA on 8 December 2004. The aim of the meeting was to explore areas where a joint response might be developed on some aspects of police reform. Some of the ideas reflected in this paper have been developed since then.

This is a draft for discussion document only and may be subject to change in light of member consideration.

Background

The APA and LGA are both supportive of local communities having a greater say in how they are policed. It was agreed that a joint response on areas of mutual interest may be a way of increasing the impact of our individual positions on this. Possible areas this might cover are set out below.

1. Crime & Disorder Act Review / Role of CDRPs

These is recognition that while many partnerships are working well as delivery bodies, governance and accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened:

- a. There is a need for better joining up of consultation/engagement and the development of strategies (particularly between local community safety and policing plans) – though how this might be done might be different in two tier and unitary areas
- b. Accountability could be strengthened by development of a scrutiny function for CDRPs building on current structures (see below)

2. Scrutiny Panels

- a. The APA believes that existing Scrutiny Panels should be extended to include police authorities and possibly other 'responsible authorities' with oversight functions e.g. Health Authority/PCT. This would help to ensure appropriate expertise is available to panel in relevant areas and also, in the case of the police authority, ensure that its statutory function to scrutinise police performance was not duplicated, but used to enhance wider community safety issues.
- b. It could also be the mechanism which would consider concerns raised by councillor community advocates (see later), and have powers to trigger wider action if necessary.
- c. It could possibly also have responsibility for overseeing S17 compliance

3. Local Authority Membership of Police Authorities

Police authorities recognise the role of local authorities in determining who they will nominate to police authorities. There is recognition, however, that there is a need to ensure that local

authorities appoint councillor members with appropriate expertise and skills to contribute effectively. A selection process of some sort would be desirable based on the following principles:

- Political balance
- Appropriate weighting between county, unitary and district councils and geographic spread
- Relevant experience of scrutiny or community safety
- Commitment to ensuring a fair police service for all, including capacity to commit adequate time to police authority work
- Gender
- Ethnicity

4. Community Safety Cabinet Member

The current white paper proposals that the Community Safety Portfolio Holder should automatically be nominated to the police authority, could present difficulties in relation to the need for political balance in nominating councillor members[, which is a criteria that both APA & LGA agree should continue to be applied]. Instead local authorities could appoint a councillor member to the police authority with specific responsibilities for liaising with the Community Safety Cabinet Member and better co-ordinating strategies between the two organisations (perhaps by building on existing legislation which provides for a member of the police authority to answer questions to the local council).

5. Two Tier Areas

The APA supports the principle of giving district councils a clearer, fuller role in local accountability for policing and community safety. Some suggestions are set out below, but none is entirely satisfactory, as the number of district councils is likely to exceed the number of police authority seats available at this level:

1. It might be possible to construct a county-wide nominating body appointed by all district councils within a police authority area, which would receive nominations from each district and then appoint from amongst these according to the principles set out at paragraph 3 – but this would mean that some districts will lose out on having a police authority member;
2. It might be possible to rotate membership more frequently than is currently common at councillor level, but there are significant disadvantages in this, including time required to get to grips with the job and lack of continuity.
3. Alternatively, the concept of district level representation on police authority could be replaced by nominating someone at this level to a joint scrutiny panel (see paragraph 2 above). This would allow for wider representation and provide some measure of accountability for public money at district level, although granted not full accountability for policing precept.

6. Community Advocates

The APA agrees this is a role that should be undertaken by local councillors, with action to be triggered through a joint scrutiny panel (see above).

7. Councillor/Police Authority Training in respective roles

The APA are strongly supportive of increasing the knowledge and expertise of local and police authorities in each others functions, and would be keen to work with LGA in securing measures to support training and induction.

Additional Reponse Areas

Since the meeting of 8 December 2004 a number of additional areas have been discussed informally between APA and LGA. The APA's initial position on these is set out below for LGA members to discuss and consider whether there might be some potential for developing a joint position.

1. Delegation to BCUs

The APA support greater delegation to BCUs, provided it is within an appropriate framework, consistent with accountability to police authorities. We could not support an accountability strand which ran directly through the local authority, but we do agree that community safety issues need better joining up at local level and it might be possible to consider some element of involving local authorities through a joint scrutiny panel (see above).

2. Community Engagement

The APA supports the white paper proposals for police authorities to have oversight of local community safety consultation plans – but we do believe other partners have a key role to play in implementing such strategies and that the real issue here is about better joining up of consultation activity. We would be supportive of measures that improved this.

3. BCU Fund and Safer & Stronger Communities Fund

We are supportive of the greater local control which the Safer & Stronger Communities Fund seeks to achieve, but as currently drafted the proposals do not properly reflect the role of police authorities, which we think runs counter to greater local accountability. If police authorities were to be properly involved in oversight and scrutiny as part of their statutory role of financial stewardship for policing monies, then there is scope for BCU community safety funds to be incorporated into the more flexible SSCF.

4. Local Policing Priorities and Police Performance

The APA recognises that the government has a role to play in setting the overall national strategic framework for the police service through the National Policing Plan. However, we have long argued that there should be greater emphasis on local policing priorities in delivering a police service relevant to local communities – and welcome the increased focus that government has put on this in recent years. The APA is currently leading work with HO, ACPO and others on how this can be taken forward.

We agree that measuring the police service against local targets is an important measure of effectiveness and accountability to local communities. This strand is already being developed through PPAF local priorities measures, on which APA are currently working in tandem with other tripartite partners, as previously stated.