

## **Police Restructuring**

### **Decisions**

**That**

- 1. Members views are sought on the key issues raised in paragraph 8; and**
- 2. Members are asked to agree that the LGA take forward the work set out in paragraph 11.**

### **Actions Required**

- 3. Lobbying strategy to be developed and implemented on the basis of the principles set out in this paper.**

**Action by: Safer Communities Board team with the APA.**

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## Police Restructuring

### Summary

1. This report informs members of the government's proposals for restructuring the police service in England, following the publication of the HMIC report 'Closing the Gap' that investigated the service's capacity to deal with organised cross-border crime. It seeks to identify the major issues the proposed reforms raise for the LGA and local government, and informs members of work planned for producing a response with key partners.

### Background

2. Earlier this year the LGA submitted its response to the government proposals for police reform set out in the White Paper 'Building Communities: Beating Crime.' This was developed on the basis of the LGA's primary objectives of ensuring that local communities have the maximum capacity to determine their own community safety priorities, and that the key role played by local government services in achieving a sustained reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour should be recognised. We welcomed in particular the White Paper's acknowledgement of the need for increased emphasis on local control and the determination of policing policy by local communities. We have subsequently been in discussion with the Home Office on a range of proposals, including:
  - Neighbourhood policing - ensuring that mechanisms are set up that give all sections of communities influence over policing policy and that the key role played by elected local government and individual ward councillors is recognised;
  - The trigger mechanism (a mechanism for ensuring that communities can trigger action by the police or other community safety partners where they believe these agencies are not adequately responding to community needs) ensuring that the mechanism provides a simple, quick and fair means of achieving its objectives; and
  - Local authority members of police authorities - ensuring that local authorities have the freedom to determine how their members will be selected for membership of police authorities.

This work has been developed close collaboration with the Association of Police Authorities.

3. Alongside this initiative, in April 2005 Home Office Minister Hazel Blears wrote to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary requesting the collection of evidence on the capacity of the police service to effectively deal with 'Level 2' Crime (organised crime that crosses police borders). The result of this work, a report by HM Inspector of Constabulary Denis O'Connor 'Closing the Gap': a review of the 'fitness for purposes, of the current structure of policing in England and Wales.'

4. The key finding of the report was that the present 43 force structure was not fit for purpose for future challenges and must change. It concluded that there was a clear relationship between the size of a force and its ability to provide protective services (such as dealing with serious organised crime, counter terrorism, critical incident management, major crimes and public order). The solution recommended by HMIC was to reconfigure the service based on strategic forces that would also have the required critical mass to provide effective neighbourhood policing and protective services. The report argued that strongly empowered Basic Command Units would comprise a key part of this. It was suggested that neighbourhood policing could suffer from loss of personnel when a force had to deal with exceptional demands, for example, to staff a major investigation or public order incident and therefore that 'in-built resilience' at a strategic level would improve the resources for local policing.
5. On 19 September the Home Secretary endorsed HMIC's findings and invited police forces, in consultation with criminal justice, local government and other partners, to come forward by the end of December with firm proposals for restructuring in each region. The text of his statement is attached as appendix 1. A central team headed by John Giffard, Chief Constable of Staffordshire, was set up to coordinate and support this process.
6. The service has been asked to consider certain criteria in coming to its conclusions, as set out in the HMIC report. The criteria are size of force, geography, criminal markets, co-terminosity with local government and Criminal Justice System partners and local identity.
7. On 22 September, the Home Secretary provided further guidance on the nature of the work that he expected to take place for developing options for force restructuring and the time frame involved. In a letter to all Chief Officers and Chairs of Police Authorities in England and Wales, the Home Secretary outlined the process for force restructuring which will operate to the following time scale:
  - October - forces were expected to report to the Home Office setting out a short list of options for further examination in the next phase;
  - November - forces are expected to undertake a cost benefit analysis of the short listed options and identify their preferred option. This should be fed back to the Home Office and
  - December - forces will be expected to further validate and refine their preferred option before submitting the final report to the Home Office by 23 December.

#### Issues for local government and the LGA

8. These are far-reaching proposals that will have an impact on and consequences for a range of key areas relevant to community safety whilst the LGA is unconvinced that a full business case has been made for the structural proposals recommended it is important to influence the review in a positive direction. Key issues include:
  - that the key role played by local government in achieving a sustainable reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour is recognised;

- strengthening of the local democratic input into local policing by target and priority setting from the bottom up, not just at the regional level down;
- national targets are phased out and replaced with a framework of advice and guidance;
- performance assessed according to success in meeting locally determined targets;
- that effective and appropriate governance arrangements are in place at all levels throughout the reform of the police service structure;
- continued and strengthened local government representation on police authorities;
- that the momentum towards neighbourhood policing is maintained;
- that the ability of communities to set their community safety priorities and determine policing policy at all levels is enhanced;
- that the geographical boundaries of the new structures should be co-terminous with those of stakeholder and partner organisations;
- full account is taken of the central role played by Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Local Area Agreements in creating safer communities;
- that funding arrangements must have a firm representational base;
- that the capacity for effective contingency planning is maintained;
- that reform recognises the valuable contribution that the local authority scrutiny function can make to the oversight of local policing and community safety activity
- that reform should reflect and be fully aligned with the proposals made in the Government's 'Building Communities: Beating Crime' paper;
- that enough time is given for the proposals to be developed to reflect these principles and that a full business case for reform can be made; and
- that local government is fully and effectively consulted both individually and collectively in the development of the proposals.

#### **The Association of Police Authorities**

9. A joint member level meeting with the APA and the Chair of Police Authorities in Corporate Membership was held on 20 October specifically to discuss the proposals. The main issues discussed were:

- **Councillor membership of police authorities**
  - That the pace of the reform was too quick and that the case for reform has not been fully or convincingly made;
  - Concern about the adverse impact on accountability of the creation of larger police forces;
  - The need for Police Authority chairs to be elected by members of that authority and not externally appointed; and
  - That local authority membership of police authorities is vital.

It was agreed that local authority membership on police authorities was vital, but that when looking at models of a more strategic and regional shape there should be work undertaken on methods of achieving acceptable levels of representation without every local authority being represented. It is also important to develop suitable means of accountability at the basic command level.

## **Police Authorities in Corporate Membership**

**10. A member level meeting with Police Authorities in Corporate membership to discuss this issue was held on 1 November when the proposed reforms were discussed and it was agreed that the following four principles should be central to any new structure:**

- **That there should be no taxation (i.e. precepting powers) without representation;**
- **That there should be local democratic input into local policing;**
- **That Chief Constables should be accountable to their public; and**
- **That the geographical boundaries of the new structures should be co-terminous with those of stakeholder and partner organisations.**

**At that meeting it was agreed that:**

- **work on model governance structures be undertaken over the next 4 to 6 weeks through small working groups;**
- **representatives of Police Authorities in Corporate Membership be kept informed of, and consulted on, by correspondence the emerging model structures;**
- **the models that emerge from the working groups be submitted to the Home Office and used as part of the ongoing lobbying activity in this area;**
- **the work on model governance and organisation be used as part of a campaign to attract authorities not in corporate membership by demonstrating the benefits to be gained from being in membership of the LGA; and**
- **a letter be sent to the Home Secretary urgently to highlight concern about the lack of policy authority direct involvement in the most recent phase of the review and urge for greater Member involvement (especially through the LGA) in future phases of the review .**

## **Future action**

**11. It is recommended that:**

- **the work identified by both the joint meetings with the APA and the representatives of police authorities in corporate membership be carried forward;**
- **further lobbying and representational work be conducted on the basis of the principles set out in this report; and**
- **this work be fully coordinated and integrated with the LGA's work on responding to the Police Reform White Paper, taking particular account of the need to ensure that it reflects the development of local area agreements.**

## **Implications for Wales**

**12. The proposals relate to police forces in both England and Wales.**

## **Financial/Resource Implications**

**13. No exceptional implications have been identified at this stage.**

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