

Federation

Briefing



Voicing the concerns of rank and file police officers

The Police Federation of England and Wales is a staff association, formed by statute, which represents all police constables, sergeants, inspectors and chief inspectors in the geographic police forces of England & Wales.

As the voice of c.136,000 officers, we felt it was important to share with you their concerns about what is happening to the job that they are proud to do for a service that is the finest in the world.

The message that is being sent to us by our members from around the country is a strong one that we are certain parliamentarians will not wish to ignore – officers are deeply concerned about their future and what they see as the deterioration of the service to the public. Morale within the service is at an all-time low, public trust in the service is under threat and relations between the government and the service are becoming increasingly strained.

What follows is a short summary which aims to present the current situation from the perspective of rank and file officers with suggestions on how things may be improved.

Reopen the debate on police financing

- The Federation have always accepted the fiscal gap had to be addressed and that all

constituent parts of the public sector would have to play their part in sharing the financial burden. However, what has caused the service great consternation is the size of the hit specifically to the police service.

- The 20% cut to the police budget, front loaded for the first two years, which was announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 appeared to take no head of the report by Sir Denis O'Connor (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary), entitled 'Valuing the Police', which warned that cuts to the policing budget of over 12% would not be achievable without damaging frontline services. Paul McKeever, Chairman, Police Federation of England and Wales stated at the time, "Let's be clear here. The government has chosen to make these cuts which stand in stark contrast to other sectors; the NHS budget has been ring-fenced, cuts to defence are 7% and there has been an increase in the overseas aid budget by billions."
- The government maintain that cuts to the service can be made without effecting frontline services. But what is meant by frontline services? If we work on the basis that this

means 'anything that is not back office support services' then, according to HMIC, this means that 95% of officers and PCSOs work in frontline services. It is therefore clear that cuts of this magnitude cannot be absorbed simply by re-engineering the back office and cutting bureaucratic processes. This is something that has already been done by many forces as part of their on-going approach to increasing efficiency. The fat has already been carved off leaving only muscle to cut away.

- The evidence of this is already becoming clear. In the last 12 months the number of rank and file officers has already been depleted by 4,000. In their recent report, Adapting to Austerity, HMIC estimated that by 2015 the total number of officers will reduce by 16,200. This will turn the clock back to 2002 in terms of total service strength but when the increase in the population is taken into account, this means an officer:citizen ratio the likes of which we haven't seen since the 1970s and one of the lowest in Europe.
- The reality is this is putting extra stress and strain on our members who are striving to deliver a level of service to the public with ever

dwindling resources. They want to maintain a police service they can take pride in, not one they have to continually apologise for.

- Rising crime and civil unrest must serve as a stark warning – it's time to pause, think and urgently reconsider the 20 per cent cut to the police service.

Slow-down the reform programme

- In March 2011, within a period of a couple of weeks, the police service faced Tom Winsor's review of police terms and conditions, Lord Hutton's review of public sector pensions and Peter Neyroud's report on police leadership and training. Each one of these reports contains recommendations which, if fully implemented, would have a dramatic effect on the working lives of police officers. This has been accompanied by proposals that would see a fundamental change to the way policing is governed with the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners.
- The sheer pace and scale of the proposed changes and the way they are being implemented seems like an attack by the government, not just on the pay of police officers but on the whole framework of the service; the people it employs and the people it serves.
- We would like to see more time set-aside for meaningful consultation with stakeholders and the public in order to make sure that the right reforms are made and that forces have time to adapt to changes.

- We have yet to see any model of policing that clarifies what is essential and what is desirable – until this has been determined, valuable resources and ultimately tax-payers' money will continue to be poured into the wrong things. That's why the Federation has repeated its call for a Royal Commission – now is the time for a fundamental and holistic review into all aspects of policing.

Respect the negotiation process

- Police pay, pensions, terms and conditions are all currently under scrutiny with a significant proportion of officers facing the prospect of losing substantial sums of money from their pay packets.
- Earlier in the year, Part 1 of Tom Winsor's proposals were brought to the table at the Police Negotiating Board having been waved through untouched by the Home Secretary.
- The Federation - as part of the 'Staff Side' of the PNB – fully engaged in the negotiating process, but could not accept the proposals as they stood as they would (in our considered opinion) disadvantage the majority of the officers we represent. The Staff Side therefore brought an alternative proposal to the negotiating table, one which not only represented a fairer deal for police officers but also would at least match or, at best, increase the level of financial savings of the Winsor proposal. At a meeting of the PNB on 26th July the Official Side rejected

the Staff Side's proposal resulting in a 'failure to agree'. This triggered a referral to the Police Arbitration Tribunal which is currently in the process of accessing each individual proposal from Winsor's review which was brought to the table. The decision of the arbitrators will be made in the autumn and the Federation will respect and accept that decision come what may.

- It is our concern that the Home Secretary is not duty bound to accept the PAT's decision and has the power to veto it if she chooses to do so.
- This has never happened in the 30-year history of the PNB and it is our plea that the Home Secretary should respect a negotiation process that has stood the test of time and accept the PAT's decision in the same way that we will.

We hope you have found this briefing useful and informative and we respectfully ask, on behalf of our members and your constituents, that you take these views into consideration and do what you can to support the police officers of England and Wales.

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