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Dear Home Secretary,

**Re: The Policing Green Paper – From the neighbourhood to the national:
policing our communities together**

I am writing on behalf of the Safer Stockton Partnership about the proposals in the Policing Green Paper to introduce directly-elected crime and policing representatives, and in particular their role in charring crime and disorder reduction partnerships/community safety partnerships.

Much of the Policing Green Paper is welcome and we can understand the argument that something needs to be done to address the public's sense that they have little influence over the police and little say in decisions about policing. However introducing crime and policing representatives, and then giving them a role in the running of CDRPs/CSPs is not the solution to how the public can be more involved, or how they can be made to feel they have more say in tackling local community safety priorities. Indeed we are concerned that introducing crime and policing representatives as proposed will have the opposite effect.

In the view of the Safer Stockton Partnership crime and policing representatives will:

- Undermine our partnership, as the crime and policing representatives will have different policy aims from those of the other partners, especially the local authority, making agreeing objectives more difficult;
- Increase the possibility of a culture of blame developing at a local level as the crime and policing representatives seek to blame other agencies and partners for local crime failures for electoral reasons, making it more difficult for local people to decide who is responsible for successes or failures in reducing local crime;
- Make joint working on complex issues more difficult as the crime and policing representatives divert scarce resources to their electoral priorities, which may be based on simplistic analyses of why crime occurs or on populist messages.
- Undermine local trust in the police by some sections of our community if candidates with extremist political views are elected. The police, whether it is true or not, will then be seen to enforcing the political agenda of whatever candidates are elected, thereby undermining our community cohesion work;

- Have no more flexibility to address local crime priorities than police authorities currently do. Without changes in the performance assessment regime, the setting of government targets and the powers of the Home Secretary to intervene directly it is likely that introducing crime and policing representatives will only increase dissatisfaction with the police when people realise they are no more able to address their concerns than before;
- Create substantial additional financial and administrative burdens for police authorities as a result of the elections for the new representatives and running the Community Safety Funds.

In addition we do not understand what problem the proposal to have the crime and policing representative chair our Community Safety Partnership is designed to address. In Stockton-on-Tees we have built up an effective and close working relationship between the police and the other key partners. These partners have come together to agree local policing priorities, and these have been built into our Local Area Agreement targets.

Making our communities safer and reducing crime does not require structural changes to the way our CSP is run. Rather we need to be left to concentrate our resources on tackling local crime priorities. Unfortunately having the CSP chaired by a the crime and policing representatives only really offers local people the prospect of a considerable amount of CSP time being taken up negotiating new targets and priorities between the existing partners and the new chair. It also offers greater scope for disagreement on what should be done with both the council and the crime and policing representatives having a direct electoral mandate on crime and community safety matters.

Instead of reducing crime our fear is that these proposals will undermine our ability in Stockton-on-Tees to tackle crime. These problems could be avoided if our CSP was left to get on with its job, rather than enforced tinkering with the chairing arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

Geoff Lee
Chair of Safer Stockton Partnership

Cllr. Steve Nelson
Cabinet Member for Housing &
Community Safety
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

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