

2nd Draft

Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People – Response from the Safer Stockton Partnership

Our response is not confidential.

1. Why should anyone listen to our views?

- 1.1 We are a Community Safety Partnership established in 1998, when the crime rate in Stockton-on-Tees was above the England & Wales average: it is now well below the national average (61.6 crimes per thousand population in 2009/10 compared to 79.1).
- 1.2 Over the last six years, (i.e. in the period since the last major change in National Crime Recording Standards) the crime rate in Stockton has reduced by 46% (from 114.3 to 61.6) compared to an England & Wales reduction of 31%, a North East regional reduction of 38%, and a reduction for the rest of the Cleveland Police area (Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland) of 36%.
- 1.3 In 2003/04 of our 26 Wards had a crime rate above the national average, but by 2009/10 this figure had reduced to five. We believe that there is no such thing as an acceptable level of crime, a statement which has featured in our last two Community Safety Plans.

2. Foreword

- 2.1 We agree that the community safety agenda should be largely influenced by the views of local people. We have not become disconnected from the people we serve: Cleveland Police has consistently featured in the top three forces for public confidence, and the Safer Stockton Partnership has prepared four Community Safety Plans, each covering a three year period (starting 1999, 2002, 2005 and 2008) each of which has been based on the priorities identified by local people as a result of extensive consultation.
- 2.2 On each of these occasions, except for the first, we have drawn up a Consultation Strategy, agreed by the Partnership, with targets designed to ensure increased participation and the involvement of all sections of the community (e.g. people from high crime and low crime Wards, all age ranges, white and non-white etc). On each occasion we have targeted and achieved an improvement in the number of respondents, and we have found that feeding back on how responses shape priorities, and how our performance relates to priorities, helps to build engagement. We have also found that public priorities make sense and are shaped by performance. e.g. as we have dramatically reduced dwelling burglary, it has dropped out of the public priorities, as also with vehicle crime.

- 2.3. We are about to start consultation with a view to preparing our fifth Community Safety Plan.
- 2.4 We recognise that the Government is committed to introducing directly elected Commissioners. We are concerned that these roles could be occupied by someone with agenda or approach which is not conducive to either good policing or good or effective partnership working and we would suggest giving careful thought to eligibility criteria, including whether or not the threshold for standing for election for this role should be set higher than for ordinary elected office (in terms of the number of registered electors whose consent needs to be secured) and whether or not consideration should be subject to a requirement to declare any criminal record.
- 2.5 It is true that “the police are charged with keeping people safe, cutting crime and ASB”. So are Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Police Authorities, Fire Authorities and Probation Trusts, and it is important that this continues to be clearly recognised. In particular, it is important that the arrangements for replacing PCTs include arrangements to ‘passport’ their current statutory duties in respect of crime and disorder to the new GP commissioning consortia, otherwise there is a risk of loss of momentum in terms of the integration of health services with the community safety agenda.

3. Chapter 1 The challenge

- 3.1 Paragraph 1.7. We agree that “Partnerships made strong steps in trying to work together to prevent crime, but were pulled in opposing directions by different Government departments”. Over the last 10 years both the Audit Commission and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary have recommended that the Section 17 responsibility applied to a range of public bodies by the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, should be extended to Central Government Departments. In a classic example of ‘do as we say, not as we do’ these recommendations have fallen on deaf ears. Now is an ideal opportunity to implement these recommendations.
- 3.2 It is also important that the section 17 duty is applied to directly elected Commissioners (as the replacement for Police Authorities).
- 3.3 We agree that ‘Offences Brought to Justice’ targets got in the way. In our view it is necessary to distinguish the real hierarchy of aims; between primary goals (e.g. reducing crime and ASB) and secondary aims – the targets which someone supposes will help to get us there. We are happy to be held accountable at the level of outcomes.
- 3.4 Paragraph 1.13. We agree that form filling has become excessive but urge the need to distinguish between the information which was required of the police and local partners to satisfy the demands of Whitehall – which we agree should be dropped – and that required as local feedback and management information about the nature of crime and ASB issues

at local level, which is still required, in order to inform more effective interventions. The reason we make this point is that there is a danger of ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’. Front line staff in all our organisations have an instinctive dislike for performance data, but sometimes it is genuinely needed in order to support analysis of local problems which will drive improved performance through solutions devised or replicated at local level.

- 3.5 Paragraph 1.17. The need for more effective work with local partners is not easily reconcilable with greater visibility and availability on the streets, at a time of shrinking resources. This is likely to oblige local partners to make choices between visible services and continued investment in some of the ‘invisible’ forms of capacity (e.g. profiling and targeting, Integrated Offender Management teams) which have helped to achieve reductions in offending in recent years. Continued engagement in the rhetoric of ‘police on the streets’ is not helpful. Previous work by the Audit Commission on the ineffectiveness of non-targeted patrol should not be forgotten (or it will need to be reinvented).
- 3.6 Paragraph 1.18. We are concerned that the attack on the £6 million spent on advertising the Policing Pledge is itself a muddled message, sitting, as it does, within a document the main thrust of which is about public engagement. This is less than £150k per force, and harmonises well with some of the comments in Chapter 4 about the merits of national procurement in the interests of efficiencies in public spending.
- 3.7 Paragraph 1.23 It is essential that Commissioners should include public consultation within their approaches. We will not readily accept priorities established by a Commissioner if they do not at least equal the standards of our own consultation process (see paragraph 2.2 above). The simplest way to manage this potential conflict in mandates is to require Commissioners to work with Community Safety Partnerships and to take account of their consultation processes.

4. Chapter 2 Increasing democratic accountability

- 4.1 We are surprised by the claim that independence was augmented by the changes in 1994, since these included a move away from local democratic accountability to a power of patronage for Whitehall.
- 4.2 The proportion of Wards which return Police Authority members would be tripled on average by a simple reform to the effect that all places on Police Authorities are taken up by elected Councillors. In our case, the increase would be even more dramatic. Stockton-on-Tees currently has only one Councillor on Cleveland Police Authority, despite being the largest of the four unitary authorities served by Cleveland Police. A proportional share of places would give Stockton six of the seventeen.

- 4.3 Paragraph 2.5 again raises the risk of conflicting mandates – please see paragraph 3.7 above.
- 4.4 Paragraph 2.7. Elections are not due in Stockton in May 2012. Who will bear the cost of the election of a Commissioner? There is a significant risk of very low turnout, which would compound some of the potential problems previously mentioned at paragraph 2.4 above.
- 4.5 Paragraph 2.9. Again, engagement processes adopted by the Commissioner should take account of existing processes operated by Community Safety Partnerships.
- 4.6 Paragraph 2.12: We are not clear whether there will be any debar to the same individual serving as a Commissioner and a local Councillor, or as a member of a Probation Trust Board. This will need clarification.
- 4.7 Paragraph 2.22. It is clear that the introduction of PCSOs has helped to address the deficits in the representation of women and people from BME communities in police services. However, this progress is threatened by public spending cuts. One of our neighbouring police services has already put all of its police staff on 90 days redundancy notice.
- 4.8 Paragraph 2.26. We need more detail on the Police and Crime Panels. In particular, the reference to ‘independent and lay members’ sits uneasily in a paper which aims to strengthen accountability. Who will appoint these people? Why not have panels which are made up entirely of elected Councillors? Surely this would be more in keeping with local accountability? It may allow for greater party political balance (there are six political groups on our Council).
- 4.9 Paragraph 2.27. The term ‘operationally sensitive’ is dangerously ambiguous as a basis for exempting papers from scrutiny. Who will make the initial decisions, and who will mitigate on cases of dispute? Also, there are cases where a paper may be operationally sensitive when prepared, but no longer so after a fairly brief period (e.g. after an operation has been carried out). We pose these questions in the hope that they can be used to inform the development of a more detailed position.
- 4.10 Paragraph 2.34. We welcome and support the intention to release crime data to the public in a far timelier manner. This will involve dropping current Home Office objections to the publishing of unaudited data, and would also be enhanced by a far swifter turnaround of national comparators than under the current system, where crime figures for an April-March year are not published until July.
- 4.11 Paragraph 2.41. Further information on the proposed reserve powers is needed before we can comment on this issue.

Consultation Questions

1. Will the proposed checks and balances set out in this Chapter provide effective but un-bureaucratic safeguards for the work of Commissioners, and are there further safeguards that should be considered?
2. What could be done to ensure that candidates for Commissioner come from a wide range of backgrounds, including from party political and independent standpoints?
3. How should Commissioners best work with the wider criminal justice and community safety partners who deliver the broad range of services that keep communities safe?
4. How might individuals best engage with their communities – individuals, businesses and voluntary organisations – at neighbourhood level?
5. How can the Commissioner and the greater transparency of local information drive improvements in the most deprived and least safe neighbourhoods in their areas?
6. What information would help the public make judgements about their force and Commissioner, including the level of detail and comparability with other areas?

5. Chapter 3 Removing bureaucratic accountability

- 5.1 Paragraph 31. “Police officers should be crime fighters, not form writers”. We support this general sentiment, but respectfully point out that sometimes effective crime fighting will involve filling in some forms (see para 3.4 above).
- 5.2 The scope for conflict in this area is exemplified by the reference in para 3.3 of the White Paper (third bullet point) to “keeping bureaucracy to a minimum at force level” and the reference within half a page at para 3.6 to “we do not want to end up with a system where forces put out the minimum amount of data”. One person’s bureaucracy is another person’s ‘data vital for accountability’, and there is no quick and easy route through the problem – it requires engagement with the complexity and detail.
- 5.3 Paragraph 3.7. “Partnerships have focused on following prescriptive processes and targets set by Whitehall which have pulled them in different directions and prevented them from focusing on what matters locally”. We do not recognise this as a description of our local position. As discussed in our Section 1 above, we have kept the faith with local people’s priorities. We note that the top-down pressure from Whitehall has generally been greater in respect of drug services and the work of Youth Offending Teams than for other aspects of the community safety agenda.
- 5.4 Paragraph 3.10. We have some concerns about the reference to reviewing NCRS. There is a risk of loss of continuity of data on performance. As well as having access to inter-area comparisons, it is also very useful to us in monitoring our performance and how best to improve it that we have access to robust series and trends. If there were a fundamental change to NCRS we may lose some value. However, we also recognise that problems are associated with differing interpretations of NCRS, leading to a lack of comparability between forces, and unnecessary bureaucracy, particularly in relation to lower level issues such as minor public order offences and low value criminal damage. We would therefore offer a cautious welcome to the prospect of review, and advocate a balance between continuity and elimination of the most significant problems, as outlined above.
- 5.5 Paragraphs 3.11 – 3.17. We support the general analysis in this section. In order to carry through this programme of cultural change effectively there will need to be a review of all the primary legislation and statutory guidance which promotes cultures of risk aversion.

Consultation Questions

7. Locally, what are examples of unnecessary bureaucracy within police forces and how can the service get rid of this?

8. How should forces ensure that information that local people feel is important is made available without creating a burdensome data recording process?

9. What information should HMIC use to support a more proportionate approach to their 'public facing performance role', while reducing burdens and avoiding de-facto targets?

10. How can ACPO change the culture of the police service to move away from compliance with detailed guidance to the use of professional judgement within a clear framework based around outcomes?

11. How can we share knowledge about policing techniques that cut crime without creating endless guidance?

6. Chapter 4 A national framework for efficient local policing

- 6.1 Paragraph 4.4. The National Crime Agency also needs to be given an obligation to co-operate with Community Safety Partnerships. We are happy with the idea of a mutual obligation in this respect.
- 6.2 Paragraph 4.6. We support the analysis on avoidance of wholesale structural change.
- 6.3 Paragraph 4.9. This paragraph would be greatly improved by a recognition that dealing with crime and ASB is for a range of partners, not just the police. For example, in Stockton-on-Tees the Council hosts the multi-agency ASB Team, which includes seconded officers from Police and Fire, the Council delivers and funds most of the public open space CCTV and the Probation Trust hosts the Integrated Offender Management Team, which includes officers seconded from Police, Council and Prison Services.
- 6.4 Paragraph 4.13. We agree with this paragraph, which reinforces the point made at 3.4 above about the need to retain management information which is of local value.
- 6.5 Paragraph 4.15. If HMIC is to “produce publicly accessible information reflecting the priorities of the community”, a laudable aim, how will it identify these priorities? The simplest way will be for HMIC in the first instance to look at what consultation work has been done by Community Safety Partnerships.
- 6.6 Paragraph 4.16. You ask which agency is best placed to spread information on effective techniques. A co-ordinated approach does not require the existence of a separate co-ordinating bureaucracy. Police services and other local partners are perfectly capable of learning from one another, particularly if facilitating systems (e.g. iQuanta) are maintained, and if HMIC and other Inspectors promote that approach by asking questions like “What have you learnt from your peers in the last 12 months?”
- 6.7 Paragraph 4.19. An equally effective alternative to inter-force collaboration is cross-sectional collaboration locally. For example, Stockton and Darlington Councils have an established and successful partnership for a range of IT, HR and Financial support services. Other local partners could make use of this vehicle.
- 6.8 Paragraph 4.21. A word of caution about counter terrorism structure: the current structures seem to experience some difficulty in relating to non-police partners within Community Safety Partnerships, perhaps because their own personnel are drawn almost exclusively from Police and Security Services backgrounds.

- 6.9 Paragraph 4.30. In our view, seizure and confiscation of assets is one of the most effective methods of addressing organised crime, and there is scope for exploiting this more extensively, which would be incentivised by allowing a greater proportion of the proceeds to come back to local delivery agencies. This 'payment by results' approach could also stimulate an increase in revenues to HM Treasury.
- 6.10 Paragraph 4.33 /4.36. At paragraph 4.33 there is also the potential for conflicting mandates, and again a lack of awareness that other local delivery partners, as well as the Police, can enjoy the support and confidence of local communities. As stated at 4.36, there is a need for more clarity about "who is in charge of what", and we look forward to further and more detailed consultation on this issue.
- 6.11 Paragraph 4.35. The duties to collaborate between Commissioner, and between Commissioner and the NCA, need to be multi-directional, i.e. the Agency also needs to be under a set of duties to collaborate, and Community Safety Partnerships need to be included in the matrix.
- 6.12 Paragraphs 4.42 / 4.43. We are unclear about how the proposed Border Police Command would relate to the UKBA.
- 6.13 Paragraph 4.49. It would be consistent with the direction of trend towards local accountability for outcomes if individual police services were able to opt out of national arrangements if they could demonstrate their ability to secure better value for money from local arrangements.
- 6.14 Paragraphs 4.53 – 4.55. It is important to emphasise that the ACPO role will simply be advisory, since ACPO itself lacks democratic accountability. The reference to making ACPO accountable to those who fund it needs further thought, since ACPO is ultimately funded by taxpayers.

Consultation Questions

12. What policing functions should be delivered between forces acting collaboratively?
13. What are the principal obstacles to collaboration between forces or with other partners and how can they be addressed?

14. Are there functions which need greater national co-ordination or which would make sense to organise and run nationally (while still being delivered locally)?

15. How can the police service take advantage of private sector expertise to improve value for money, for example in operational support, or back office functions shared between several forces, or with other public sector providers?

16. Alongside its focus on organised crime and border security, what functions might a new National Crime Agency deliver on behalf of police forces, and how should it be held to account?

17. What arrangements should be in place in future to ensure that there is a sufficient pool of chief officers available, in particular for the most challenging leadership roles in the police service? Is there a role for other providers to provide training?

18. How can we rapidly increase the capability within the police service to become more business-like, with police leaders taking on a more prominent role to help drive necessary cultural change in delivering sustainable business process improvement?

7. Chapter 5: Tackling crime together

7.1 Paragraph 5. It is important to recognise that key local delivery partners extend beyond the Criminal Justice System. Local authorities, fire authorities and PCTs are not part of the CJS, but have important roles in Community Safety Partnerships.

7.2 Paragraph 5.9. 101 is referred to as a “single national police [our emphasis] non-emergency number”. This seems to assume that police have the lead role in relation to ASB. This is at least debatable – please see 6.3 above.

7.3 Paragraph 5.14. We hope that the new crime strategy will fully recognise the role and potential of Community Safety Partnerships.

7.4 Paragraph 5.17. In order to improve public confidence in the CJB, a joined-up approach across Central Government is required. On 2 August 2010, among the criminal trials concluded at Newcastle Crown Court, one man was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment for dishonesty offences relating to a book (First Folio of Shakespeare) and another man who carried out an unprovoked attack in the street on a man and his wife, who were unknown to him, and following which the male victim died without regaining consciousness, was sentenced to 5 years. No doubt all was consistent with central advice and guidelines, but almost nobody believes this is right.

Consultation Questions

19. What more can Government do to support the public to take a more active role in keeping neighbourhoods safe?

20. How can the Government encourage more people to volunteer (including as special constables) and provide necessary incentives to encourage them to stay?

21. What more can central Government do to make the criminal justice system more efficient?

22. What prescriptions from Government get in the way of effective local partnership working?

23. What else needs to be done to simplify and improve community safety and criminal justice work locally?

Table 1

“We are considering creating enabling powers to bring together Community Safety Partnerships at the force level to deal with force wide community safety issues and giving Commissioners a role in commissioning community safety work”. This is far too important a point to be buried in the footnotes, and it is unclear how the two halves of the sentence relate to one another. We have no problem at all in co-operating with other Community Safety Partnerships in Cleveland, and have done so on many issues where it is consistent with our local mandate. Equally, we would be very happy if the Commissioner were to make additional resources available. However, the Commissioner will not have any role in the deployment of non-police resources unless he or she joins our Partnership – this may be the most effective solution to the potential problem of conflicting mandates.

Diagram 1

As stated above (at 2.1 - 2.3 and at 5.3) we do not recognise this portrayal as an accurate one for Stockton, where local people already have a key role in deciding priorities for our Partnership