

Policing for a Better Britain

Report of the Independent Police Commission

Summary and Recommendations

We are no longer able to improve policing by spending more money on the police service. That path has been closed off. Given this, the Commission has taken great care to develop a vision of better policing and a set of practical proposals which do not require additional resources.

A Social Justice Model of Neighbourhood Policing

1. The Commission recommends that the social purpose of the police should be enshrined in law.

We believe that the national statement of purpose for Police Scotland has much to commend it as a model for enacting a legislative purpose for the police in England and Wales. Section 32 of the relevant legislation declares:

'The policing principles are

- (a) that the main purpose of policing is to improve the safety and well-being of persons, localities and communities in Scotland, and
- (b) that the police service working in collaboration with others where appropriate, should seek to achieve that main purpose by policing in a way which
 - (i) is accessible to, and engaged with, local communities, and
 - (ii) promotes measures to prevent crime, harm and disorder.'

2. **The Commission recommends that a Local Policing Commitment is introduced.** The substance of this Commitment will be subject to further discussion. However, it should include the following:

- (a) a guaranteed minimum level of neighbourhood policing;
- (b) emergency response or an explanation of why this demand will not be met or can be met by other means;
- (c) requests to the police for assistance, or reporting a crime will be met by a commitment to appropriate response times;
- (d) reported crime will be investigated or an explanation given of why this is not possible;
- (e) victims will be regularly updated as to the progress of the investigation; and
- (f) those coming into contact with the police whether they be victims, witnesses, offenders or complainants will be treated with fairness and dignity.

Creating Effective Partnerships

5. Local community safety partnerships are being undermined by cuts to local government and by the shift of focus and budgets to PCCs. **The Commission recommends that the success of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 needs to be built upon. We need to protect and extend the statutory arrangements that the Act put in place and the Commission recommends a considerable strengthening of police accountability at the so-called Local Policing Unit (LPU) which is where Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) generally operate. These proposals are set out fully in chapter three.**

Achieving Better Democratic Governance

9. Following a careful evaluation of the evidence, **the Commission concludes that the PCC model is systemically flawed as a method of democratic governance and should be discontinued in its present form at the end of the term of office of the 41 serving PCCs.**
10. The Commission sees no benefit in reinstating local police authorities in place of PCCs, nor does it consider it desirable to return to the days of trying to steer local policing from Whitehall. The Commission proposes to further democratise decision-making over policing by devolving greater powers to lower tier local authorities. The Commission recommends four key measures to achieve this:
 - (a) **The introduction of a legal requirement on the police to organise internal force boundaries in ways that are coterminous with the lowest relevant tier of local government;**
 - (b) **Legislating to give local government a say in the appointment of local police commanders;**
 - (c) **Enabling lower tier local authorities to retain at least some of the police precept of the council tax which they will then use to commission local policing from their force. This funding would be ring fenced to fund the police service and could not be diverted into other local authority services;**
and
 - (d) **Giving those same lower tier local authorities the power to set priorities for neighbourhood policing, the local policing of volume crime and anti-social behaviour, by formulating and agreeing with local police commanders policing plans for their town, city or borough.**
11. Having devolved decisions over local policing matter to a more local level, we recommend that **at force level a Policing Board comprising the leaders of each local authority within the police force area** be given the power to set the overall budget for the police force area, appoint and dismiss the chief constable and formulate and agree with the chief constable the force level policing plan setting out the strategic priorities for the force.
12. Two other options should also be considered: **relocating the powers and budget currently held by the PCC so that they are jointly exercised by an Elected Chair and indirectly-elected local Policing Board, or transferring to a directly-elected Local Policing Board their powers of priority-setting, community engagement, commissioning services and developing close relationships with other criminal justice and community safety agencies.**
13. The Commission believes that local community engagement has to be made a routine component of police work and a core responsibility of those elected to hold the police to account. **We recommend that police forces consider establishing 'participatory budgeting units' in order to ensure greater involvement of local communities in allocating local policing resources.**

Raising Standards and Remedying Misconduct

28. We recommend the abolition of HMIC and of the IPCC, and the creation of a new single IPSC. From the outset the IPSC should create a database with the necessary storage facilities to retain oversight of serious investigations (historic and current) which are or are likely to be of significant public interest. This new agency would hold police forces to account for the delivery of standards, deal with misconduct effectively and efficiently, and ensure all failings are addressed without delay.

A Structure Fit for Purpose

32. The Commission found broad agreement that the present structure of 43 separate police forces for England and Wales is no longer cost effective or equipped to meet the challenges of organised and cross-border crime. In a world of greater mobility and fiscal constraint the model is untenable. **However, there is little or no consensus about a better alternative arrangement.** Against this backdrop, the Commission makes a clear recommendation that change is essential and believes there are three serious options for finding a path out of the current impasse, namely:

- (a) Locally-negotiated mergers and collaboration agreements: actively encouraging forces to group together and supporting voluntary amalgamations, enhanced cooperation learning best practice lessons from the bottom-up;
- (b) Regionalisation: A coordinated amalgamation into approximately ten regional police forces;
- (c) National Police Service: The creation of a single national police service (Police England and Wales) or two separate forces (Police England and Police Wales).

We recommend that detailed proposals for structural change, with the locally-negotiated mergers and collaboration agreements, regionalisation and national police service options produced and a wide-ranging consultation undertaken with a view to securing swift implementation.