

Proposed Local Government Measure Committee - Consultation

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POLICE AUTHORITIES OF WALES PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE

Introduction

1. The Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure consultation.

2. Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) is a representative body of the four Police Authorities in Wales: Gwent Police Authority, Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, North Wales Police Authority and South Wales Police Authority. The main aims of PAW are to:

- Consider and act upon issues affecting policing in Wales, particularly those that are under the control of the National Assembly for Wales.
- Maintain a broad Welsh prospectus on police matters.
- Promote and protect the interests of member Authorities.
- Seek to influence the policing agenda at a national level on behalf of Police Authorities and local communities in Wales.
- Support Police Authorities in securing efficient and effective policing services across Wales.
- Enable Police Authorities to improve.
- Promote awareness of policing needs and the role and achievements of Police Authorities.
- Uphold and champion the principles of local accountability and policing by consent.

3. The Statutory responsibilities of Police Authorities are attached at Annex A. As an overview, however, Police Authorities are responsible for:

- Setting the budget for their police force, including the levels of council tax.
- Determining the strategic direction for local policing through 3 year and annual plans.
- Consulting local people about what they think are the most important things the police should be doing and setting local and policing priorities in light of that consultation.
- Setting their force challenging targets to drive performance higher.
- Continuously monitor force performance against those targets and regularly report to local people on how well the force is doing.

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4. PAW fully supports the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for collaborative services in Wales and is fully committed to collaborative working both amongst Police Authorities and Forces and with other partners such as Local Authorities. In its response to the consultation paper: Local Vision: Preparing Community Strategies, PAW stated that it supported in principle the proposed duty to cooperate to enhance community planning and re-affirms this support in relation to the duty on community planning partners (including Police Authorities) to participate in community planning and to assist the local authority in the discharge of its duties - as set out in the proposed measure.

5. All four Police Authorities in Wales are engaged in partnership working across a range of policy areas, but perhaps most notably in relation to Community Safety via the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) on which Police Authorities are statutory members. It is noteworthy, however, that Police Authorities have not been statutory members of CSPs since their inception in 1998. Rather, Police Authorities had to argue the case to become involved and were then included within the statutory membership of CSPs under the Police Reform Act 2002.

6. Police Authorities have faced a similar situation with regards to Local Strategic Partnerships/Community Strategy Partnerships in Wales, where in the past they have not been represented on the Partnerships. Police Authorities have much to offer and can play an important part in the community planning process. After all community safety issues are one of the key issues of concern and/or interest within communities and Police Authorities are effectively the voice of local communities in this regard. It is imperative that the role of Police Authorities is recognised.

7. In its response to the consultation 'Making the Connections - Local Service Boards in Wales: A Prospectus for the First Phase 2007 - 2008' PAW argued that Police Authorities should have complete membership and involvement with the Local Service Boards (LSBs). The level of this involvement, however, would be dependent on the issues that the LSB was addressing. PAW also emphasised in its response that this could pose some capacity issues for Police Authorities, particularly those with a large number of Local Authorities within their boundaries. This concern regarding capacity is equally true with regards to participating in the Community Planning

process/Community Strategy Partnerships.

8. In addition to capacity issues, PAW is also concerned about the cost and resource implications of the new duty and would like assurances that Police Authorities would receive additional resources to enable them to respond to the new responsibilities. It must be

emphasised that any new statutory duties placed on Police Authorities that are not within existing/planned Home Office policy will require us to divert our funding to meet those duties and therefore we may find ourselves trying to meet two sets of statutory duties which are not always complementary to each other. Furthermore, in order to meet this dichotomy, there could be a depletion in services.

9. Finally, and perhaps more fundamentally, as Policing is a non-devolved service, PAW is keen to know what discussions have taken place within the Home Office in relation to the proposed new duty bearing in mind the tripartite relationship within which we operate. PAW believes that proper consultation between the Welsh Assembly Government and the Home Office is imperative in order to help ensure that Police Authorities in Wales are not subject to conflicting demands and responsibilities.

Conclusion

10. Police Authorities of Wales is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure consultation and hopes that the above is helpful. PAW would be happy, however, to elaborate or provide further information which may be of benefit. Should this be required, first contact should be made with our Policy Officer:

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