

POLICE SUPERINTENDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES



Submission to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee Restructuring of Constabulary - Democratic Structures

The Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales

The Association

The Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales (P.S.A.E.W.) represents over 1500 Superintendents and Chief Superintendents.

Our members lead Basic Command Unit (B.C.U.) Command Teams and at Force Level command Support Departments and are responsible for managing the provision of operational and specialist support to their B.C.U. colleagues. In particular our members perform the critical role of Senior Investigating Officer for murder and other serious crime enquiries and silver/gold command for firearms incidents.

At a National Level our members are seconded to the Home Office and other National Agencies where their expertise and experience inform policy making and delivery of high level National Policing Services.

Chief Superintendent and Superintendents are integral to the delivery of policing at local, force and national levels.

They have a wealth of experience in:

- Service delivery.
- Partnership working.
- Working directly with communities.
- Commanding high profile policing incidents.
- Budgetary management.
- Human resource management.
- Delivering local force and national policing priorities.

Objectives:

1. To lead and develop the Police Service to improve the quality of our service delivery to local communities.
2. To influence practice, policy and decision making at Chief Officer and Government level.
3. To provide appropriate support and advice to members to maintain and improve upon the professional status of the Superintending ranks and to constitutionally enjoy the rights of consultation, participation and negotiation on all matters relating to the duties, responsibilities, welfare and efficiency of the members and the Police Service other than in respect of promotion affecting individuals.

Officer presenting Submission

Chief Superintendent Ian Johnston is the President Elect of the Superintendents' Association of England and Wales.

Within the Association he has specific responsibility for the Crime Business Area and the Basic Command Unit Liaison Area. He maintains a database of all Basic Command Unit Commanders in England and Wales and is daily communication with his colleagues throughout the country.

Ian Johnston has been the full-time Vice President of the Association since 2004 having served for 33 years with the Gwent Police and was the B.C.U. Commander serving the Local Authority areas of Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent immediately prior to taking up his appointment with the Association. He previously served as BCU

Commander at Pontypool covering the Local Authorities Areas of Torfaen and Monmouthshire.

He has also served for 5 years as Head of C.I.D. with Gwent Police and has considerable experience commanding major enquiries and incidents.

Moving Policing Forward - Proposals for the Future

In March 2004 the Association responded to the Government's Green Paper by presenting a submission - "Moving Policing Forward - Proposals for the Future." The submission concluded that:

"A logical solution would be a National Police Force deployed through a regional structure".

We made this proposal recognising that the creation of a National Police Force would not sit comfortably with the rationale that British Policing is best provided by local units allied to traditional boundaries.

It was however, our firm view, that our proposal would provide precisely such a structure at the most local level and would simultaneously provide the consistency of approach which is so glaringly absent at the present time. The Association strongly believes that the emphasis should be on delivering local services locally and national priorities nationally.

We concluded by saying, that whilst appreciating that many people feel a deep and very genuine loyalty to their current forces, the existing structure of 43 autonomous entities aligned to boundaries which no longer reflect government structures in the regions or the very local identities felt by individual communities, has we believe, outlived its usefulness.

A large part of the Association response related to the functions and the make-up of a Basic Command Unit.

Co-terminosity

The requirement of engaging Partnership Working makes co-terminosity the single most critical factor in determining whether a B.C.U. can deliver effective local policing.

We believe that the more closely aligned the respective partners boundaries then the more effective the partnership will be in delivering community safety. Where B.C.U. Commanders are required to work with multiple partnerships that in turn can sometimes be required to work with more than one B.C.U. Commander an inevitable confusion follows.

Funding

The current Funding arrangements for B.C.U.'s are haphazard with a wide divergence of practice across England and Wales. Some are given significant devolvement of funds and considerable flexibility. Others have budgets that are dictated and controlled at Force Level with only the most limited devolvement available.

Even where full devolvement is enjoyed it is not uncommon for funds to be withdrawn at short notice to pay or address Force priorities. This can have the effect of hindering short and medium term planning which has usually been already been agreed with partners.

In addition to resources allocated at Force level there is a confusing array of ring-fenced funding streams that usually require a successful competitive bid to be submitted (usually at short notice) to the relevant funding agency.

Many of these bids are unsuccessful and on occasions successful bids come with strings attached.

The fairly recent innovation of providing funds directly to B.C.U.'s together with access to other partnership funds has proved to be a great enabler to allow B.C.U. Commanders to have the financial wherewithal to enjoin with partners to solve local community safety problems.

It is essential that B.C.U.'s be directly funded to a statutory level. The mechanism for this funding needs to be transparent and clearly understood. B.C.U. Commanders need the flexibility to determine their spending in line with agreed local priorities and the number of additional funding streams should be reduced or even abolished.

Accountability

We believe that local communities should receive the Police commitment agreed in the local Community Safety Plan.

We encourage the strengthening of dialogue between communities and their local officers. Accountability for policing should be at the most local level of delivery where communities can have a direct and meaningful affect on the way they are policed.

Many B.C.U.'s have been very successful through their Community Safety Partnerships in identifying even the most hard to reach groups within their communities and giving them both a voice and the opportunity to participate in B.C.U. objective setting.

The recently published findings of the Review of the Crime and Disorder Act will have a direct impact upon the restructuring debate. The proposal to place strategic responsibility at the Local Strategic Partnership Level with the Community Safety Partnerships becoming more tactical will need to be handled carefully and sensitively.

We support the development of democratic legitimacy of the B.C.U. level of accountability (Police and Criminal Justice Bill 2006). We would like to see a joint responsibility resting on both the elected representatives and the B.C.U. Commander to ensure that all of the communities served by a B.C.U. are given an effective voice.

The elected representatives together with the B.C.U. Commander must become the recognised public faces of Policing and Community Safety within the B.C.U.

Whilst the B.C.U. Commander must remain accountable for operational matters to their Chief Officers we see a clear role for such an elected body by holding a B.C.U. Commander publicly to account for the delivery of locally agreed priorities.

We would also support elected representatives being involved in the selection and appointment of B.C.U. Commanders. We would envisage such a process being achieved by a consensus between Chief Officers and elected representatives.

Size

Association research reveals that in January 2004 there were 320 Basic Command Units in England and Wales. There are currently less than 250.

Some Basic Command Units are very large and we question whether the B.C.U. Commander in such Units can provide the visible direct leadership style that is required. We recognise that given the importance of co-terminosity it is inevitable that some B.C.U.'s will be significantly larger than others but we believe that where it is proposed to create a B.C.U. with more than 600 staff there must be clear and unequivocal case to demonstrate that other positive factors override this potential disadvantage.

B.C.U. Command Structure

We strongly advocate that each Basic Command Unit should be headed by a Chief Superintendent supported by a Superintendent or Superintendents' depending upon the size of the B.C.U.

There is little doubt that the B.C.U. Commanders role has changed significantly in recent years where the main responsibilities of the role can now be identified as:-

1. Corporacy.
2. Partnerships.
3. Leadership.

The Superintendent in the B.C.U. is becoming more and more responsible for the daily operational delivery.

Each member of the Command Team must have a clearly defined role and responsibilities and each person should have the necessary experience to carry out their individual roles.

Within Wales there is considerable disparity between B.C.U.'s in terms of the size of command teams when considered against the demand.

H.M.I.C. Report

As an Association we agree with the vast majority of the recommendations made in the H.M.I.C. Report "Closing the Gap" 13 September 2005. Policing in England and Wales should move away from the present 43 Force structure.

There is a requirement for a more efficient, integrated, operating platform above B.C.U. Level. The organisation of Service Delivery must be on a scale large enough to respond dynamically, but local enough to understand the diverse context with which it operates. An all Wales Strategic Force will need to address cultural, political and geographical challenges.

The Report assessed the capability of current Police Forces in relation to the provision of Protective Level 2 Services under seven broad headings:-

- Major Crime (Homicide)
- Serious, Organised and Cross-Border Crime
- Counter Terrorism and Extremism
- Civil Contingencies
- Critical Incidents
- Public Order
- Strategic Roads Policing

The findings of the Report are stark. Very few Forces meet the required standard to deliver Protective Services.

Whilst much has been said in relation to counter-terrorism our Association has attempted in recent years to draw attention to the gap that exists in relation to serious and organised crime that transcends Ward, B.C.U. and Force Boundaries. The reality is that many crimes/criminals that are identified through the National Intelligence Model Process on B.C.U.'s are not being dealt with. Many cases are beyond the capability of B.C.U. resources and departments at the "Centre" are unable to cope due to the level of demand.

I referred earlier to the undoubted loyalty of individuals to specific Forces but research has shown that the majority of people identify strongly with a discreet neighbourhood wanting an identifiable local officer. Some partners and local politicians identify more easily with a District or B.C.U. while a much smaller but important group value links at the County Level.

As an Association we believe that maintaining the local link with communities is paramount. We must provide visible and accessible policing with officers locally known.

The question of collaboration between Forces has been raised. There is no reason why this collaboration should not continue albeit the Forces concerned may sit in different new strategic Forces.

In terms of the command structure for the strategic all Wales Force we would support the appointment of a second Deputy Chief Constable enabling the Force to be managed with an organisational and an operational split.

The operational arm of the Force would include all operational staff and responsibility for territorial and Level 2 Protective Service Operational Activity. The organisational arm would include Human Resources; Finance; Estates; I.T.; Corporate Development etc. i.e. all the activities that support the delivery of the operational service.

Each Deputy would be supported by an appropriate number of Chief Officer colleagues with options for functional and territorial responsibility.

The creation of a larger Force will present the opportunity for Functional Portfolios for Chief Officers e.g. Crime. This principle also applies to other areas of protective services.

In the current Forces the reality is that A.C.P.O. Officers are required to have broad portfolios and be omni-competent in a wide range of activities. In strategic Forces as demands, complexity and the requirement for specialist knowledge increase it will be difficult to sustain the current arrangements.

Effective development, training, career path planning will be vital to ensure the future holders of leadership roles in a strategic Force have the technical skills to effectively manage larger specialist portfolios.

To merely divide up A.C.P.O. responsibility geographically will, in our opinion, be a missed opportunity.

Ian B Johnston Q.P.M.
President Elect

Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales