

Report to Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 2 September 2008

**Subject: "From the Neighbourhood to the National:
Policing our Communities Together" – a Home Office
Green Paper**

Officer contact for further information: J Gilbert

Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry



Recommendation:

To consider the Panel's response to the Home Office Green Paper "From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our Communities Together" and to report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee accordingly.

Summary

Effective policing is critically important to the lives of everyone in the District. On a national scale, policing costs the nation £11 billion a year and employs more than 200,000 people. Policing has undergone major changes, the most recent of which has seen the reintroduction of neighbourhood policing and named officers in communities. The Home Office proposes to build upon these recent changes and improvements and is bringing forward proposals based upon ideas which have arisen from the public and the police themselves.

The Green paper focuses on 7 key areas, namely:

- **the local dimension** and how to build upon the successes of neighbourhood policing through the introduction of directly elected local police representatives and service standards to the public through a "police service pledge"
- **reduction of bureaucracy and red tape** to free up officer time for front line duties
- **development of policing skills in the police workforce** including PCSOs and specials
- **deployment of police resources** to improve the service to the public and ensure a police service representative of local communities
- **government support for these proposed changes** through the Home Office, Chief Constables and Police Authorities
- **cross force co-operation** including matters such as counter terrorism and policing our borders
- **performance management** and changing the relationship between the Police and the community it serves

Whilst all of the above are of interest to the local authorities, it is those relating to the changing of the relationship between the police and local authorities which are of the greatest concern. The Local Government Association have expressed fears about these changes whilst at the same time welcoming much of the content of the Green Paper. This report therefore concentrates on those issues.

Report

The local dimension and accountability

1. The Green Paper makes, throughout, very strong references to two previous studies undertaken on behalf of the Home Office:

- (a) "Review of Policing" – Sir Ronnie Flannagan; and
- (b) "Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime" – Louise Casey

both of which placed considerable emphasis on the value which local communities place upon their local neighbourhood police teams and the need for a very close linkage between those police teams and the local council. The requirement was clearly one of working together.

2. The Green Paper sets out a vision for achieving the three key areas identified by Sir Ronnie Flannagan for improving the public's sense of connection with their police:

- (a) answerability – the way the police consult and deal with issues at public meetings etc
- (b) responsiveness – a quick & efficient response leaving the community satisfied that their concerns have been taken seriously
- (c) accountability – formal relationships such as the role of the police authority in improving local performance

3. The Green Paper goes on to discuss in detail each of the above key areas and setting out how Government wishes to approach them, for example by:

Answerability:

- (a) a commitment to expanded neighbourhood policing
- (b) neighbourhood policing teams spending more time on patrol
- (c) commitment to ring fenced funding of PCSOs for further 3 years
- (d) establishing core principles for the functions and roles of PCSOs with standard and discretionary powers
- (e) working together locally using good practice from around the country to include:
 - strong local leadership
 - defined neighbourhoods
 - shared priorities
 - shared information & communication
 - co-ordinated local teams, working where possible from the same location
 - nominated local officers
 - a neighbourhood lead (e.g. neighbourhood manager)
 - strong community engagement
- (f) changing Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)/Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) so that probation trusts become 'responsible authorities' and expanding their role to include reducing re-offending
- (g) visible community sentencing

Responsiveness

- (a) adoption of national service standards through a "Policing Pledge" which will ensure the local police service:
 - works to keep you and your neighbourhoods safe from harm
 - treats you fairly and equitably
 - publicises details of local police teams
 - ensures that 80% of neighbourhood team time is spent in your neighbourhood
 - responds to all enquiries within 24 hours
 - answers 999 calls within 10 seconds and others within 30 seconds
 - gets to emergency calls within 15 minutes
 - responds to vulnerable persons and neighbourhood issues within 60 minutes
 - responds to all other issues at an agreed time, making & keeping appointments

- etc
 - meets with the community on a monthly basis
 - acknowledges service complaints within 24 hours and keep you informed
 - keeps victims of crime up to date on a monthly basis with the investigation
- (b) some of the above will be locally determined but every pledge will have standard elements relating to information on local officers, contact numbers, monthly meetings, agreeing local policing priorities, complaint processes and statistical information.
- (c) legislative provision already exists for public involvement in health matters and consideration will be given to extending this to crime & disorder matters by, for example, a “Councillor Call for Action”, whereby a Councillor could bring particular matters to the attention of the CDRP or CSP
- (d) promotion of cultural change in the police through additional training and encouraging good customer service

Accountability

- (a) Sir Ronnie Flanagan’s report makes strong mention of what appeared to be a disconnection between the public and its police service, through a lack of accountability. He emphasised that the public had no say in the election of members to the police authorities and also had no way of dealing with dissatisfaction of the operation of police authorities.
- (b) Government is therefore proposing radical changes to the existing democratic structures to make them more democratic and more effective in responding to local concerns. This will be achieved through a legislative reform resulting in:
- independent members appointed as present which includes a magistrate or ‘lay justice’
 - the retention of at least one councillor to maintain the link with local authorities
 - the majority membership being elected from the community as “Crime and Policing Representatives’ (CPRs) to represent local concerns
 - CPRs sitting on CDRPs/CSPs and one in each area chairing the CDRP/CSP
 - CPRs sitting on the police authority
 - possible changes current CDRP/CSP constituencies
 - where there is a locally elected Mayor, that person automatically becoming the CRP
 - upper tier authorities remaining represented on the police authority
- (c) the creation of a ‘Community Safety Fund’ being made available to CPRs to enable them to address local priorities, the resources being drawn from the current Basic Command Unit Fund (BCU). The funding would be held by the police authority.
- (d) the provision of local statistical information through processes such as crime maps and local websites

Freeing up police resources and workforce development

4. The next two sections of the Green Paper relate directly to how the police service uses the resources it has. Whilst the police are clearly best placed to respond to these issues, the following are key issues raised:

- reducing ‘red tape’
- changing the current target driven culture
- police authorities to be set ambitious local targets rather than be held accountable for broad performance
- increasing the use of mobile ICT resources
- additional training to reflect the requirements of “21st century policing”

- defining roles for PCSOs (see earlier in report)
- further increasing the recruitment and deployment of special constables

Deployment of police resources

5. This section of the Green Paper deals with how the police resources are deployed in order to provide the best local service to the community. It is proposed that in 2010 Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) will undertake inspections of all police authorities to determine progress in this regard.

6. The police service has a wide range of customers, including the law abiding public, but there are also more direct customers such as victims of crime and witnesses. In dealing with these customers the service has to be cognisant of different cultures, religions and ways of life. The Home Office vision for the police service is:

"A police service that has the trust and confidence of all communities and a service that reflects the community it serves."

To achieve this the Green paper puts forward a strategy which comprises, inter alia:

- the setting of minimum equality standards for policing
- working with the various staff associations
- active talent management to ensure that representation at senior post level reflects the makeup of local communities

7. The Green Paper then goes on to discuss deployment and ensuring that this aligns closely with local service demands. To this end the Green Paper puts forward:

- force managers understanding that deployment and getting resources to where they are needed, when they are needed, as being at the heart of their role
- well trained managers, with training to include effective deployment
- making use of existing additional support at key times
- police authorities holding forces to account in this critical area of work

Government support for changes & force co-operation

8. These sections of the Green Paper are very specific to the operation of the police service. The Green paper seeks to establish where proper decision making should be made, for example:

(a) at the local level, decisions on the neighbourhood element of the Policing Pledge, reaching agreement with partners in respect of local priorities, targets and the determination of the correct workforce mix for effective local policing;

(b) at the regional level, decisions on cross boundary use of resources, regional tasking etc; and

(c) at national level, retaining existing issues such as counter terrorism, but also to include issues such as procurement, ICT and senior officer development

9. The sections on force co-operation and national strategic working are very specific to policing operations, with the exception perhaps of how is it possible to maintain local accountability when dealing with national issues such as counter terrorism, illegal immigration and large scale drug offences etc? Reference is made to whether the establishment of specialist national policing units (an existing example being the British Transport Police) with their own Chief Constables might provide the effective use of resources, acknowledging that this would require large scale remodelling of current policing arrangements.

Improving performance

10. The Green paper sets out a new performance management framework for the police

service, where there is a greater degree of local accountability for that performance. This will be achieved through:

- the Policing Pledge and local publication of information and statistics
- the direct election of public representatives (the CPRs) onto police authorities
- police authorities holding local forces directly to account
- guidance to police authorities on how to undertake their new roles
- improved training for police authority members
- enhancing the sharing of data between police forces
- a lead and mandatory role for police authorities in assessing the performance of Chief Constables
- police authorities to have access to HMIC
- independent inspection of police authorities from April 2009
- power to intervene in under performing police authorities

11. Nationally:

- government will further support CDRPs/CSPs by capacity building and the provision of tools to enable them to undertake their role effectively
- government will ensure that LAA/PSA targets are achieved
- HMIC will be strengthened
- the reduction by 50% of data collected from forces
- the dropping top down targets but replacing with one which reflects public confidence and the implementation of the Policing Pledge
- by extending present government powers of intervention to deal with under performing police authorities

Comments

12. Much of what is contained within the Green Paper can be generally supported, since it sets out to improve the relationship between the police service and the public. It also proposes to reduce the current bureaucratic demands placed upon the police service, enabling officers to spend more of their productive time in the communities they serve; this is clearly something to be welcomed.

13. The commitment to further support neighbourhood policing is also to be welcomed, along with the key proposals which underpin that commitment, namely:

- the “policing pledge”
- continuation of ringfenced funding
- standardisation of roles for PCSOs
- expanded role and membership of CDRPs/CSPs
- Councillor “calls for action”

14. As alluded to in paragraph 12 above, changes to the performance regime are also to be welcomed with fewer national targets and prescription and a shift to local target setting, albeit built around the overarching requirement to have “*a police service that has the trust and confidence of all communities and a service that reflects the community it serves.*”

15. However, the proposals around local representation and the role of the new Crime and Policing Representatives (CRPs) are clearly more contentious. A number of representative bodies such as the LGA and the Association of Police Authorities have expressed their alarm at the proposal stating that the effect will be the opposite of what is intended by undermining the existing partnership working that exists between local councils and the police. For example the LGA view is:

“We oppose the replacement of councillors on police authorities by directly elected crime and policing representatives. Councillors and councils already have a direct democratic mandate to represent local people. Creating parallel local democratically elected posts will result in competing electoral mandates, and the risk that successful partnership work between the police and local authorities is undermined. If the government is seeking to strengthen local accountability and partnership working local authorities should have a greater role in holding the police to account”.

Alongside this basic proposal sit the proposals that the elected CRP should be the Chair of the CDRP/CRP and should have direct access to funding which they can spend on local initiatives.

16. It is interesting to note that where there is a directly elected Mayor, that person shall automatically become the CRP and the Chair of the CDRP/CSP. It has been suggested that this is a government attempt to drive that particular agenda forwards. Interestingly however, if in time it can be shown that the mayoral model works at least in respect to the management of CDRPs/CSPs then it may be possible to argue a strong case for the role to become embedded through a similar role for leaders of Council or relevant Cabinet members.

17. This Green Paper will doubtless also be considered by the Council's current partners. These include the Safer Communities Partnership (SCP), Essex Police and Essex County Council. The SCP does not meet until the 15th of September, after the date of this meeting. If any information comes forward from other partners ahead of this meeting, this will be provided orally at the meeting.

18. The Council's response to this consultation needs to be returned to the Home Office not later than Friday the 10th of October 2008. The recommendations of this Panel will therefore go forward to Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 29th of September, then reported orally to Cabinet on the 6th of October 2008