



Essex Police Authority & Essex Police Best Value Review

Policing and Force Structure



INTRODUCTION

In 2004/05 Essex Police Authority agreed a three year Best Value programme to include a review of Force structure at Basic Command Unit level and Force headquarters to improve public safety in Essex.

WHAT NOW?

A small team has been appointed to work on the review. Part of the work of the review is to ensure that local strategic partners are consulted to obtain their views on how Essex Police can work best with them to ensure benefits for local residents and businesses in terms of crime reduction, detection and prevention, reducing and dealing with anti-social behaviour, providing public reassurance and safer neighbourhoods in which to work, live and visit.

The review aims to increase the number of police officers on the front line by 100.

In addition to the work of this re-structuring review Essex Police is already identifying an additional one hundred police officers currently in back-room functions and placing them on the frontline to drive down crime and serve the public. It is also launching a campaign to significantly increase its volunteer strength, the Special Constabulary over the next five years, and has plans to substantially increase the number of Police Community Support Officers (PSCOs) it employs.

Work is also underway to determine a common structure for neighbourhood policing to ensure a consistent approach is adopted across the force to working with communities and our many partners.

The importance of having identifiable senior police officers available to work with CDRP partners is recognised in all of the options presented.

By increasing the number of uniformed front-line staff available to patrol our towns and villages we will apprehend more criminals and remove them from our streets and, by doing this so visibly, deter criminals by increasing the real and perceived chance of detection. Moreover, we will have a positive impact on nuisance and anti-social behaviour which is a problem for many communities.

This Best Value Review was commenced prior to the recent announcements by the Home Secretary regarding the national structure of police forces. Although this review is only concerned with the internal structures of Essex Police it will have regard to any emerging national issues that may be relevant.

The review does not include Stansted Airport, because although Essex Police services the airport this is funded directly by the British Airports Authority and is a specialist location/division with special policing requirements.



ETHOS OF THE REVIEW

The overarching ethos of the review is to structure front-line policing so that it: -

- Increases the number of police officers and police staff to the front line,
- improves service to the public,
- increases face to face contact between the public and the police,
- supports rural and urban policing, and
- strengthens partnership work to provide a safer Essex.

AIM OF THE REVIEW

- 1. To prevent and reduce crime, increase detection rates and make a positive impact on anti-social behaviour by increasing police numbers and visibility by putting a further 100 police officers on the frontline by 31 March 2006.**

This forms part of the Chief Constable's pledge to deploy 200 extra officers to the front-line by 31st March 2006.

These additional front-line officers will come from existing police officer posts that are replicated across the existing nine Basic Command Units (geographical divisions) and Force Headquarters and from the redistribution of other resources by removing duplication and identifying efficiencies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

- Scrutinise existing staff and resources in the structure of the nine Basic Command Units and Force Headquarters departments to provide 100 additional police officers on the frontline.
- Ensure that common services are not unnecessarily duplicated.
- Ensure each BCU is a self contained unit capable of providing a range of services that are managed locally unless economies of scale, specialist knowledge or efficiency justify them being managed differently.
- Each BCU must be either coterminous with one or more local / unitary authority areas.
- Ensure that maximum use is made of police officers and police staff to provide policing to the public.



- Ensure structure enables improved performance at local and force-wide level, taking into account the need for neighbourhood policing and the needs of rural and urban communities.
- Maintain the ability, at a Force level, to deal with critical and major incidents on a 24-7 basis.



CONSULTATION PROCESS

The review seeks to ensure that existing public finances are invested to a greater extent at the frontline where the public receive most benefit. It aims to change how the Force is organised to do its business and will make available additional police officers and police staff to provide a visible, effective and reassuring police presence.

This review, the work already underway to move officers to the front line, our Neighbourhood Policing Team work and our commitment to PSCOs will, in combination, improve the policing we provide to our communities throughout the force area, whether rural or urban.

The review will support the drive to open police stations longer and improve the service provided to the public.

Issues and options are represented graphically and described and these descriptions reflect the Essex Police perspective.

This consultation process seeks to identify external considerations that will impact on our ability to work effectively with partners for the benefit of the community in terms of crime, its prevention and detection, making a positive impact on nuisance and anti-social behaviour and provide public reassurance.

Partner organisations are not asked to favour any one BCU structure over another if they do not wish to, but we are seeking partner perspectives in general and welcome any considerations you feel we should take into account in our deliberations on which structure represents the best for Essex.

Please send written feedback to:

Roger Baker
Chief Constable
(ref. Policing and Force Structure)
Essex Police Headquarters
PO Box 2
Springfield
Chelmsford
CM2 6DA

Written submissions are requested by Tuesday 25th October 2005.



BCU STRUCTURES

Early work indicates that a restructuring of BCUs will make available to the front line a sum of between £2.5 and £4 million, which would be a significant contribution toward funding the additional frontline officers required to enhance our service to both the urban and rural communities of Essex.

The actual amount will depend on the BCU structures adopted and the Command Team arrangements required to manage these. Any costs needed to implement any restructuring decision will be found from existing budgets.

Current BCU Structure

Nine Basic Command Units

This option would retain the current geographical boundaries as shown below. All aspects of service delivery and support would be scrutinised to identify resources to increase the front-line commitment of the Force.

N.B. This arrangement, unlike the following outline structures, does not allow the Force to redistribute resources to the frontline at a rate likely to meet the aims and objectives of this review.





The Force is a very good one and is recognised as such nationally. Leaving the structure as it stands currently represents the minimum disruption to Essex Police and its partners.

The structure complies with all statutory obligations and, as the structure is nearly eleven years old; its boundaries are well established with a support infrastructure that accommodates its needs. Prior to the current nine BCU structure the Force comprised just six BCUs and some support structures are still provided on that basis, so it is not supported entirely seamlessly. It is likely that in the immediate future the Home Secretary will legislate that BCUs will need to be coterminous with one or more local authority areas; this would necessitate some changes in the boundaries between the existing Chelmsford, Basildon and Rayleigh BCUs.

However, a failure to re-organise will mean that resources will not be able to be re-directed to the front-line.

It is notable that this structure is not comparable to most similar forces and was criticised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary as being too fragmented to be optimum.



Outline Structures for Consultation

Outline Structure A - Four Basic Command Units.

This option would reduce the number of BCUs to four. Three of the BCUs encompass three CDRPs each. The fourth BCU would encompass the remaining five CDRPs. All aspects of service delivery and support would be scrutinised to identify resources to increase the front-line commitment of the Force.



This option is much more consistent with BCU restructuring undertaken in other similar Forces (e.g. Thames Valley, Sussex, Dorset, Hampshire and Hertfordshire).

It is based on geography, incident and crime distribution. It provides coterminosity with local authority boundaries, Magistrates' Court and Probation Service boundaries (excepting a small rural area within the south-east of Braintree District Council's area), Essex Health Authority Trusts and Primary Care Trusts. Existing Essex Police specialist units such as the Major Investigation Teams, Criminal Justice Department and Road Policing Units are well positioned to support this structure.

The areas coincide with major trunk road routes; and the corridors of the M11, M25, A12, A127, A13 and A120.

This option offers the greatest opportunity to redistribute resources to the frontline via economies of scale and collaborative working. It also maximises the potential



for resources to be made available by aligning and reducing support functions by removing duplication. In addition, it would provide an equitable split in the workload of the Force across the four BCUs.



Outline Structure B - Five Basic Command Units

This option would reduce the number of BCUs to five. One BCU would encompass four CDRPs each, two BCUs would encompass three CDRPs each and two BCUs would encompass two CDRPs each. All aspects of service delivery and support would be scrutinised to identify resources to increase the front-line commitment of the Force.



This option, like Option A previously, is comparable to structures found in Forces similar to Essex. Again, it is based on geography, incident and crime distribution. It is coterminous with local authority boundaries.

Featuring five BCUs it offers significant chances to redistribute resources to the frontline via economies of scale and collaborative working and provide a fairly even distribution of work for each BCU.

It would be coterminous with the Ambulance Service (excepting the Uttlesford area) and Essex Health Authority Trusts and there would be a good amount of similarity with the boundaries of the, Fire Service and Primary Care Trusts. It would be relatively easy to geographically align support functions to the BCUs.

An advantage would be that no existing BCU would be fragmented as this option represents a merger of existing BCUs providing minimal disruption, but providing substantial opportunity for the redistribution of resources to the front-line.

Outline Structure C - Six Basic Command Units

This option would reduce the number of BCUs to six. Four BCUs would encompass three CDRPs each. The remaining two BCUs would each be coterminous with a single local authority. All aspects of service delivery and support would be scrutinised to identify resources to increase the front-line commitment of the Force.



This option would fragment one existing BCU (Chelmsford Division), but because it retains a relatively large number of BCUs, it provides less opportunity for releasing resources to the front line for citizens via economies of scale and collaborative working.

Because the number of units is comparatively high this option generates the highest support costs of all bar the Force's current arrangements (nine BCUs). There would be significant inequality of work distribution compared to options A and B, as there is with the present system of nine BCUs.

This option provides a good geographic fit with Road Policing Unit work. It is not completely coterminous with the areas of any other public sector service provider, particularly Magistrates, Fire and Ambulance partners. It does however, present less disruption to existing arrangements than options A or B.