

Essex Police Authority
3 Hoffman's Way
Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1GU

Telephone 01245 491491
Email: Robert.chambers@essex.pnn.police.uk
Facsimile: 01245 291601

Robert Chambers
Chairman



Chief Constable's Office
Essex Police Headquarters, Springfield,
Chelmsford, Essex CM2 6DA

Telephone 01245 452110
Email: chief.constable@essex.pnn.police.uk
Facsimile: 01245 452123

Roger Baker
Chief Constable



Our Ref: Force Structures Review

Date: 19th June 2006

Dear Mr Scott,

Proposed merger of Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Police Forces and Police Authorities

We are aware that you will have received correspondence from the Home Secretary regarding the recommendation that Essex Police and Essex Police Authority should amalgamate with our counterparts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The purpose of writing is to outline the foundation of this proposal, to outline the work undertaken since the potential for change was first discussed last summer and to seek your views on the possible outcome.

In September 2005, a report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary called 'Closing the Gap' was published concluding that police forces with less than 4,000 police officers or 6,000 staff overall tended to have short comings in their ability to provide effective overall policing services. Following this, the then Home Secretary Charles Clarke ordered an immediate review of the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales were structured. It was his belief that the creation of larger police forces was necessary for:

- The continued support for development of local and neighbourhood policing.
- The provision of protective services to national standards¹.
- The organisation of affordable support and strategic development.

The Home Office directed that all forces must consider whether they are able to meet the demands of 21st century policing and report their findings by the 23rd December 2005. Essex Police and Essex Police Authority submitted a joint report to the Home Office evidencing how Essex could remain as a 'stand alone' force and meet the requirement of policing in the future in terms of both capacity and capability. The Chief Constable stated that should the Home Office not agree, then the best option for the communities of Essex would be to amalgamate Essex with Suffolk and Norfolk.

¹ Protective services are defined as Major Crime, Serious and Organised crime, Counter Terrorism and Domestic Extremism, Civil Contingencies and Emergency Planning, Critical incidents, Public Order and Strategic Roads Policing

The Home Secretary considered the submissions and on the 20th March 2006, he announced that he proposed to recommend Essex Police and Essex Police Authority merge with their counterparts in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. In reaching this decision it was acknowledged that Essex had submitted a strong case to 'stand alone' but that:

'The main reason Essex Police cannot 'stand alone' is that the merger of the 3 police force areas would be in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness of policing in the combined area'.

On 11th April 2006, the Home Secretary formally notified Essex Police and Essex Police Authority of his intention to lay an 'Amalgamation Order' before Parliament in the autumn of 2006. If ratified, this order would bring about the structural changes proposed by the Home Secretary. The process of laying the order before Parliament must include a four month period of consultation which ends on the 11th August 2006. By that date any formal objections to the proposed merger must be submitted to the Home Office. We are aware that you have been contacted by the Home Office as part of the statutory consultation process, but Essex Police and Essex Police Authority would also like to understand how the proposals may affect your organisation so that an informed decision can be made on how we should progress.

We know that it is difficult for you to make judgements on matter of such significance without sufficient information and have therefore included a fact sheet to assist in understanding how this proposal may either positively or negatively affect your organisation.

Can we also seek your assistance in making your staff aware of our consultation process as many of them form part of our communities within the area. Further details of our consultation and a short questionnaire can be found at www.essex.police.uk. In addition, a questionnaire has been printed on the reverse of our Annual Report, '*Policing Essex*', that will be delivered to every household within Essex over the next few weeks.

As with everything connected with this proposed restructure, the timescale is extremely tight and so we must ask that you do all you can to provide feedback by **midday on Friday, 28th July, 2006.**

In the meantime we will continue to strive for the best possible policing service for the people of Essex, to make sure that policing services remain locally accountable and to minimise as far as possible any impact the transition may have on performance and short-term costs.

We would welcome your views and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Chambers
Chairman
Essex Police Authority



Roger Baker
Chief Constable
Essex Constabulary

The Creation of a Strategic Police Force. Some Facts:

1.0 The Background

1.1 'Closing the Gap' an HMIC Report

In 2005, Mr Denis O'Connor, HMIC, conducted a review of the 'Fitness for Purpose' of the current structure of policing England and Wales. In summary, his report stated that;

'Specifically, whilst size, scope and structure are not in any sense the only issues for the future of policing, they are extremely important. Put simply, when viewed from the context of the range of challenges and future threats now facing the service and the communities it polices, the 43 force structure is no longer fit for purpose. In the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing it should change. Whilst some smaller forces do very well, and some larger forces less so, our conclusion is that below a certain size there simply is not a sufficient critical mass to provide the necessary sustainable level of protective services (see below) that the 21st century increasingly demands'.

Later determination saw that those forces that had less than 4,000 police officers or 6,000 staff overall were deemed not capable of meeting the new pressures faced within society. Particularly with regard to protective services, being:

1. Major Crime;
2. Serious and Organised crime;
3. Counter Terrorism and Domestic Extremism;
4. Civil Contingencies and Emergency Planning;
5. Critical incidents;
6. Public Order and;
7. Strategic Roads Policing.

A full copy of the report can be found at the web address detailed below.

http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/inspect_reports1/thematic-inspections/closinggap05.pdf

The Home Office gave Forces and Authorities the opportunity to outline how they would respond to the challenges presented within the report.

1.2 The Essex Police Response

Essex Police and Essex Police Authority worked with their colleagues within the Eastern Region to identify how it could provide better policing services to our communities. A number of options were evaluated over this time including:

- One regional force,
- Two sub-regional forces; Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk: Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.
- Two sub-regional forces; Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire: Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.
- Essex as a stand alone 'strategic' force.

On 16th December 2005, the Police Authority met and resolved:

That Essex 'stand alone' is the only option. The Authority will proceed on the following basis:-

- (a) Essex to take the lead in seeking to further look into a legally binding Federation¹ of East Anglian Forces.***
- (b) In agreement with the other Five Authorities and Forces in the region any savings from such a Federation be ring fenced and put towards the provision of improved protective services.***

In studying the business case members agreed that Essex Police has both the capacity and capability to be classified as a strategic force.

The Chief Constable endorsed the submission of the Authority but added that should the Home Secretary not agree to Essex remaining as a force in its own right, then the best option for the people of Essex would be a merger with Suffolk and Norfolk. A copy of the report submitted for member's consideration can be found following the link below. This document includes a risk/benefits analysis of each option:

http://www.essex.police.uk/authority/dyn_auth.php?group=4&type=29&year=2005

The Home Office considered the submissions made, and on 20th March announced that Essex Police should merge with Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire and following initial submission said Essex had submitted a strong case to stand alone but that:

¹ *The Association of Police Authorities define federation as; "A group of forces would join together to provide 'protective policing services' collectively, across the federated area, but would still keep their local identity. Local forces would continue to deliver local policing'*

'The main reason Essex Police cannot 'stand alone' is that the merger of the 3 police force areas would be in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness of policing in the combined area'.

On 3rd April 2006, Essex Police Authority met to discuss the Home Office findings and resolved:

Whatever the outcome of the present parliamentary debate, authorities and forces within the Eastern Region need to do business differently for the benefit of the communities we serve and we acknowledge and support the continuing need for Essex Police, to continue their dialogue and work with their respective colleagues in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

However, we remain of the view that Essex Police can stand alone as a Strategic Police Force and we are asking our Chief Executive to seek Counsel's opinion on the prospect of successfully bringing judicial review proceedings to challenge the Secretary of State's proposals.

Certainly there are a number of outstanding issues on which assurances are still sought from the Home Secretary; therefore this authority cannot support a voluntary amalgamation of Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

A full copy of the report considered by members can be found on the following link:

http://www.essex.police.uk/cms/global/meetings/93_06.pdf

1.3 The Current Position of Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire

1.3.1 Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire Police Authority held their AGM on Friday 3rd June 2006. At that meeting, there was an almost unanimous vote to further explore a Police Force merger with Hertfordshire as the primary option.

1.3.2 Hertfordshire

On 31st March 2006, Hertfordshire Police Authority rejected Home Office proposals to merge amid Fears over funding and governance of any new Strategic Police Force.

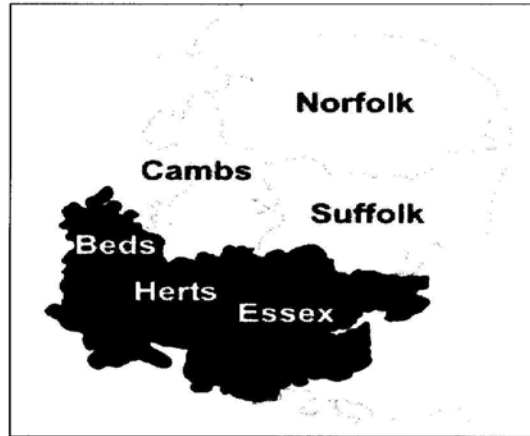
2.0 The Proposal – Some Facts

The following paragraphs include detail on the proposed change timetable, the sub-regional landscape and finance.

2.1 Proposed Timetable for Change

Date	Action
11 th August 2006	Those consulted in accordance with statute must inform the Home Secretary whether they agree with the proposal or not.
Autumn 2006	If the Authority does not agree with the proposal, the Home Secretary must state why he has rejected any objections and could force a merger by laying an 'Amalgamation Order' before Parliament. It would have to be agreed by both Houses. If the Authority does agree with the proposal, the Home Secretary would still need to get an Order ratified in both Houses.
December 2006	If the Home Secretary is successful, the new Strategic Police Authority would be established.
Late April 2007	New Chief Constable (Designate) in post.
April 2008	New force structure comes into being.

2.2 The Sub-Regional Landscape



	Essex 'Stand alone'	Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
Population	1,622,403	3,229,378
Area (Sq. Kms)	3,670	6,540
Population density (per Sq. Km)	442	494
Number of households (approx.)	742,000	1,080,000
Crimes per 1000 residents (Most recent 3 months figure)	18.8	21.9
Divisions	5 (plus Stansted)	10

Force	Police Officers	Police Staff	Total
Essex 'Stand alone' (By 31/03/07)	3,400	2,438	5,838
Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire (figures submitted in December 2006)	6,607	4,095	10,702

2.3 Finance

2.3.1 Council Tax Precept

The table below shows the current council tax precept levels for the three forces and the potential additional cost of the amalgamation to the residents of Essex. The Home Office indicated that the equalisation would be phased over a three year period. This increase would be in addition to the annual increase of cost.

	Essex 'Stand alone'	Bedfordshire	Hertfordshire	Beds, Essex and Herts	Average of all 'Shire Forces'
Council Tax Level (Band D)	£111	£118	£124	£116	£133
Budget requirement per 1,000 population	£143	£153	£159	£150	£158
Potential additional costs of Council tax in Essex	-	-	-	£5 / 4%	-

2.3.2 Funding the Amalgamation

The Home Office has promised to meet 100% of the cost of any force amalgamations net of any reasonable efficiency savings. It has also said that efficiency savings made through amalgamation will be re-invested in front-line policing services.

2.0 Consultation

Essex Police Authority has outlined to the Government its views on the future of policing in Essex but is keen to ensure those views are representative of the communities within Essex. As a consequence a detailed consultation process is being undertaken that includes:

- A questionnaire included on the annual review that will be delivered to all households in Essex and includes a 'freepost' return address.
- A separate questionnaire delivered to households in Essex and includes a 'freepost' return address.
- The questionnaire 'posted' on the Essex County Council and Essex Police Websites.
- Public engagement and feedback at community meetings.
- Media engagement led by the Chief Constable and Chairman of the Police Authority.
- Engagement of our staff and partners / other stakeholders.

We welcome your opinion

On March 20, 2006 the Home Office announced plans to merge Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police forces. Essex Police Authority is keen to assess the implications of these planned changes to our policing structure for the communities of Essex. Please send your completed questionnaire to the Strategic Force Review Team, FREEPOST, Essex Police, PO Box 2, Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6DA or alternatively you are invited to browse our website and fill in the survey on-line at www.essex.police.uk/survey. The closing date for your feedback is Friday, July 28, 2006.

1) In determining what is important to you, please respond to the following statements:

- (a) *It is important to have a rapid and responsive local policing service.*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know
- (b) *It is important to have locally accessible, neighbourhood Police Constables and staff*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know

Molten here

- (c) *It is important to have a senior police officer responsible for policing services in your local area.*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know
- (d) *It is important to have a Chief Constable (the person in charge of the police force) who is solely responsible for Essex.*

Molten here

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't mind
- Don't know

- (e) *I support the proposal to merge Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police forces.*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know
- (f) *It is important to have robust and independent accountability through a local Police Authority (locally elected officials and appointed members of the public).*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know

- (g) *It is important to have robust and independent accountability through a local Police Authority (locally elected officials and appointed members of the public).*
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Don't mind
 - Don't know
- 2) **Prior to the Home Office conducting that Essex should merge with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire a number of options were discussed. Which of these options do you think would best deliver the sort of police service you want?**

Please mark your first and second choice with the number 1 and 2 respectively.

- Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire
- Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk
- Essex standalone
- A regional force (merging Essex, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk)

3) If Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police forces were merged do you think it would:

- Cost less
- Cost more
- Cost about the same
- Don't know

4) If Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police forces were merged do you think the local policing service (neighbourhood policing) would be improved?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't mind
- Don't know

5) If Essex, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire police forces were merged do you think the protective services (those that deal with large scale emergencies, counter terrorism, serious crime investigation and major road policing) would be improved?

- Strongly agree
- Agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't mind
- Don't know

6) Do you believe there should be a referendum before a decision is made about the possible restructuring of Essex Police?

- Yes
- No

We would appreciate your answers to the following questions, however they are not compulsory.

7) Please state your age

- 21 or under
- 22 - 35
- 36 - 50
- 51 - 75
- Over 75

8) Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

9) What is your ethnicity?

- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Chinese
- Mixed ethnicity
- White
- Other (please state)

