



Statement

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reform – A New Force

Comment from the Association of Police Authorities: ‘Confused and Contradictory’

The APA would like to make it clear that police authorities exist to hold chief constables to account for delivering an efficient and effective police service on behalf of their communities. Police authorities appoint and can dismiss chief constables, they set priorities by balancing local needs with strategic and national priorities, and monitor performance against these.

The Association of Police Authorities is concerned that many of the proposed contained within the Reform report are confused and contradictory.

The report proposes structural reform of police forces which will, in effect, separate the ‘local’ from the ‘serious’ – this view demonstrates a clear lack of understanding of the complexity of crime and the significant interdependencies between crime types.

It argues that too many police forces means policing isn’t sufficiently joined up, but then advocates more than doubling the number of police forces.

The suggestion that we should have more police forces in order to make them coterminous with local councils does not take account of the cost implications of having more chief constables, each with their own accountability arrangements, inevitably resulting in greater bureaucracy and more expense to the tax payer. Nor does this proposal take account of the significant moves by police authorities to secure greater collaboration between police forces.

We do, however, recognise the need for local councils and police authorities to work more closely together to deliver shared outcomes of reducing crime and disorder and improving public confidence. Indeed, the APA and police authorities have always identified how critical partnership working is and has consistently sought to improve working relationships between the police and other criminal justice and community safety partners.

The logic for directly elected police commissioners is unclear from the report. On one hand it states that "Political debate about crime in England and Wales has been restricted to point-scoring and blame games. The lack of accountability and the need for politicians to be seen to be 'doing something about crime' has created a culture of short-termism and knee-jerk reaction." It then suggests the 'answer' is directly elected commissioners, which will simply result in party political debates at a local level. This will be damaging to policing rather than improve it.

We fully agree that more needs to be done to improve public confidence in policing and ensure the police, together with their partners, are dealing with the issues that matter to communities. In our view, police authorities are the right body to drive these improvements. Structural reform is expensive, disruptive, unnecessary, and it is not the answer.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- For further information please contact Tania Eagle, Strategic Policy Adviser on 07881672749
- The Association of Police Authorities (APA) represents all police authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as the British Transport Police Authority and the Civil Nuclear Police Authority.
- Local police authorities, along with the Home Secretary and chief officers of police, make up the tripartite relationship which is responsible for the governance of policing in England and Wales.
- Police authorities are made up of local people: a mix of local councillors and independent members (selected from the community) to represent the views of local communities.
- The job of Police Authorities is to:
 - appoint (and, if necessary, dismiss) chief constables and senior police officers
 - consult with local communities to find out what they want the local police to do
 - set the budget for their police force, and decide how much local people should pay for policing in the local council tax
 - set the strategic direction for policing locally and decide what the police should focus attention on locally based on their consultations with local communities
 - make sure the police force is continuing to do a better job
 - promote diversity and equality