

West Midlands Police boss says he'd axe his job if he had a choice

Police and Crime Commissioner Bob Jones backing a Labour pledge to abolish the controversial role because of costs



Bob Jones speaks in Birmingham after being elected PCC for the West Midlands

The new boss of West Midlands Police has said he would do away with his own job if he had the chance.

Bob Jones, the Police and Crime Commissioner for the region, has revealed he is backing a Labour pledge to abolish the controversial role – suggesting the costs of funding the ‘Byzantine’ bureaucracy surrounding it would be better spent on frontline policing.

Mr Jones claimed commissioners were actually preventing inter-force co-operation and that police officer jobs could be saved if the posts were abolished.

He spoke out as the Labour Party suggested his position would be scrapped if they win the next general election.

Mr Jones, who became the force’s first directly-elected commissioner last November, said the existing arrangements around the commissioner post were “massively complex” and expensive – and might have contributed to cuts in police numbers.

And he also warned that having separate commissioners for every force may be holding back attempts to save money by running joint services such as helicopters and armed response services with neighbouring constabularies.

They could then use the cash to pay for community policing accountable to local residents,

he said.

Mr Jones was furious when proposals to share with Staffordshire were abruptly axed by commissioner Matthew Ellis – and announced without even bothering to tell the West Midlands force.

Mr Jones backed Labour Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls, who revealed this week that Labour could go in to the next election with a commitment to scrap police and crime commissioners.

Whether to continue with the current system was one of the “important questions” Labour would face as it began work on its manifesto, Mr Balls said.

The coalition government introduced police and crime commissioners to replace police authorities, arguing that they would make police forces into more accountable and responsive to local needs.

But the change was opposed by Labour, and by Mr Jones, a former chair of West Midlands Police Authority who was the Labour candidate in last year’s poll.

Mr Jones said: “I have an immense amount of sympathy for what Ed Balls is saying. He’s pointing out that in a whole series of areas the Government’s decided to spend a lot of new money on things which don’t really seem to have much public support and don’t have much logic about them.

“It did seem to be that if people were asked what they would prefer, rather than a new breed of politicians, it would be better to have spent that money on frontline services and keep police officers on the streets.”

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