

### Consultation on the Future of Policing in Scotland – Consultation Response

Responses are provided in accordance with the questions posed by the consultation document.

#### Question 1: How could police reform improve services and the delivery of outcomes?

The strength of the current structure is a local focus on local needs with senior officers who have good local knowledge.

One favourable aspect of the current structure is that in the case of Central Scotland Police, the force has a strong local identity which members of the public relate well to. This can also be seen through the local projects and initiatives to which Central Scotland Police contribute and through surveys which the force undertakes. Some examples local projects are as follows:

- The Young Runaways projects in which the Police work with a number of local agencies to share information at an early stage on young people who are frequently reported missing, to prevent further occurrences;
- Support on domestic abuse within which Central Scotland Police are key partners. The force has been instrumental in developing and implementing intelligence led approaches to protect victims. The force has also sought civil options to protect the most vulnerable victims of domestic abuse; and
- Contributing to the Falkirk Safer Streets initiative which aims to improve the safety and wellbeing of citizens and visitors using Falkirk town centre particularly during the festive period.

The emergence of national threats needs to be reflected in the way the police are reorganised, but the creation of spin off issue focused organisations is not necessarily a route which will secure Best Value.

#### Question 2: What do you think are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing policing in Scotland today and how do you think they should be addressed?

The pursuit of a locally focused and organised police services provides the best platform to further re-inforce and increase the level of partnership working, both with other emergency services and within the context of Community Planning. Although we would accept the increasing nature and risks posed by national and international crime the police play a vital role locally in improving community safety and in the wider reassurance of the public. This often requires a flexible and creative approach in meeting diverse local needs and issues. By pursuing the best locally focused approach we have the opportunity to apply fresh thinking and innovation in how best to meet the demands placed on the Service, both today and for tomorrow. In considering this however, over and above the threats posed within the consultation paper, we would highlight the following key challenges:

- The lack of financial resources into the foreseeable future;
- Implementing a one size fits all approach;
- National and international crime threats, particularly those posed by organised crime;
- Web-based crime threats;

- The risk of continuing recession leading to increased levels of crime;
- Citizens and communities who are used to receiving services; and
- The increase in the number of older people and the ageing population in the years ahead, leading to an increase in the number of vulnerable people, many who often live in isolation within their communities.

**Question 3: How can partnership working between the police and other organisations be improved?**

There is certainly a role for ensuring that Police processes and workings reflect the best available practice. The role of the Police within Community Planning needs to be both preserved and enhanced. Within the Falkirk Council area, Central Scotland Police are full partners within the Community Planning Partnership, with the responsibilities which accompany this. The approach proposed smacks of central prescription which goes against the experience of the current approach which reflects the distinct needs of 32 areas across Scotland.

The aspiration of co-terminosity of management, leadership and service delivery at a local level needs to be pursued. This should include looking at how best to organise the Scottish Ambulance Service to assure a locally focused service.

The thinking behind this consultation seems to be fearful in accepting that in some cases strength and success can come from diversity. The central point which needs to be pursued is to enhance and strengthen the role of the police at a local level where weaknesses exist. There is an opportunity within BV2 audits for this to be looked at independently.

**Question 4: How can the police better engage with communities to help them be more resilient and self-reliant?**

Police forces make a very valuable contribution at a local level to SOA / Community Planning outcomes. The Police status as a statutory Community Planning partner in each of Scotland's 32 CPPs must be preserved. This often includes a pivotal leading role on the Community Safety Partnerships.

Police forces need to focus on local engagement which reflect the widest diversity both issues and needs which need to be addressed often within a partnership setting.

The first option concerning devolving responsibility to senior local officers to formalise structures and process for local accountability may help ensure local accountability. Should other means of engagement need to be developed then this is best to take place locally within Community Planning Partnerships. We are particularly concerned that the single force option and the reduced regional model would remove and degrade local accountability and scrutiny. It is essential that the link between local police services, senior officers and Elected Members is retained in some form within any new future structure. We are also interested in exploring further the suggested Community Resilience Hubs proposed within the Fire and Rescue consultation within the context of our local Community Safety Partnership.

**Question 5: What arrangements and relationships do you think would lead to the greatest improvements in national and local accountability?**

How will accountability be achieved within a new structure which reduces the number of forces? All of the proposed community engagement mechanisms are consultative and do not preserve local decision-making, accountability and scrutiny. In looking at restructuring options to secure greater efficiency, we must ensure the continuing effectiveness of the local organisation, deployment and responsiveness of the Police Service.

There will be a continual tension to secure the right balance between national and local accountability. Achieving an equitable balance must be one of the underpinning principles for future police reform. Further work needs to be done to clarify what aspects of the Police Service are best organised at national level and how the equally important local roles on community safety, crime prevention, response calls and public reassurance are best delivered in future.

**Question 6: Do you agree that change is necessary to protect frontline services?**

It is almost impossible to organise police forces at a meaningful local level with a uniform strength or approach. Scotland is a very diverse nation in terms of its geography, history, culture, communities and needs. The current locally focused eight-force structure has delivered some of the lowest crime rates and public confidence in the areas in which live within recent history. The current climate requires change to be applied to the future way in which police services are delivered. We would argue that any efficiencies realised as result must be given to preserving local police and community safety related services.

**Question 7: Which option do you think should be pursued and why?**

We accept due to the significance of national and international threats that a defined range of police services may be best organised and delivered at a national level. There is a need for locally focused services which are fully accountable through Elected Members to the communities they serve. These are principles which could apply to all three of the proposed options.

A single force option runs the risk of creating a large nationally focused organisation which is remote from the needs and priorities of local communities.

There is no impediment to locally focused senior officers contributing to the development of national, regional and local policing plans. The roles and responsibilities of local senior officers need to be carefully thought through and widely consulted on, particularly to assure the effectiveness of local accountability and scrutiny.

**Question 8: How could we best improve accountability, deliver efficiencies and deliver service improvements at local and national levels?**

If a regional or national structure is to be pursued, practical measures need to be built into a local area command which assures local accountability and a necessary degree of autonomy for local senior officers to be able to successfully expedite his / her role. The police statutory role within Community Planning also needs to be preserved.

Any new structure must give priority to preserving front-line police services at a local level. Local senior officers must have discretion in determining local police strength in meeting local needs and priorities. There must also be local accountability for this specific aspect to local Elected Members. As an alternative to the current joint board arrangements this could also be

achieved with local senior officers being directly accountable to a relevant Local Authority Committee.

**Question 9: Do you have any views on how the process of change should be approached, including the extent and pace of change within a given option?**

The success and achievements of the current 8-force structure need to be recognised and integral to any new structure. These strengths include:

- Having locally focused services which are fully accountable to the public through their elected representatives;
- Officers who have good local knowledge and understanding of our communities' needs and priorities and are not afraid to develop innovative solutions often in collaboration with partners in best meeting these;
- Services which are responsive in best meeting needs;
- A successful structure in terms of producing some of the lowest crime rates in Scotland at a time locally when people's confidence in their area as a safe place to live is at an all time high; and
- A key local public sector organisation which contributes both effectively and well to local partnership working.

The consultation makes the point that the existing eight force structure can prove to be a barrier in addressing the increasingly national and international organisation of criminals and criminal organisations. On the other hand, large remote organisations with a lack of effective communication and information sharing can act as a potentially bigger obstacle in facing these threats.

The proposed role of Commissioner may be suitable for those police services which need to be delivered at a national level and for the co-ordination of a national policing plan. A strong local focus requires to be incorporated in the roles and responsibilities of local senior officers with local influence at the heart of their appointment.

In order to preserve local accountability, it is important that the direct funding link between Local Authorities and local policing is maintained with the preservation of local accountability and scrutiny.

There is also an option to look at how efficiency savings may be secured looking at common / duplicate functions on a CPP basis. There is scope for looking at the potential to secure further savings through the blue light services and the scope for further collaboration and service integration. The full merger of very different and diverse blue light services simply isn't viable, due to the expertise and discreet professional knowledge needed to manage each of these services in their own right. There is however an argument for reviewing the current structure of the Scottish Ambulance Service and how responsive and accountable this is to local needs and priorities.

**Question 10: To assist with our Equality Impact Assessment on the reform, please describe any equality issues (in relation to race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender people and religion) relevant to each of the options.**

Not applicable.

**Question 11: To assist with our Regulatory Impact Assessment, please describe any financial or other impacts for business, charities and the voluntary sector relevant to each of the options.**

Not applicable.

**Question 12: Do you think there needs to be any change to the existing roles and responsibilities of the key bodies responsible for policing?**

This must be dependent on the options for change which are pursued in future. Future role and responsibilities need to support the change process. There is a urgent need to further develop a vision and more detail on how local policing and support services will be best organised and delivered at a local level if we are to underpin our recent achievements into the future.