



Home Office

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Sir Ronnie Flanagan GBE QPM
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary
Ashley House
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29 NOV 2007

Dear Sir Ronnie

On 12 September this year, you presented to me the interim report of your independent review of policing in England and Wales. I am very grateful for all the work you have put into developing a set of challenging messages and important recommendations. This brief letter sets out formally how I and my Ministerial colleagues are already taking forward work in response; how I plan to do so in the coming months; and sets out some specific areas on which I would be grateful if you could focus as you develop your final advice to me for January next year.

I should begin by recording formally my thanks to you and to senior colleagues from the service, from police authorities and others who have helped you in your work so far. I know that police officers and members of the public from throughout the country have given up their time to send in their views, to take part in focus groups and to share their ideas for how to improve policing in the way we all want to see. I know that they will continue to do so as you take forward your work.

The government's response so far

In the months since you have published your interim report, the government has already announced some significant steps in response. In responding to your call for greater use of mobile data, I was delighted to announce at the end of September the creation of a £50m Home Office fund to help pay for the rollout of **10,000 mobile data devices** to police officers next year. The National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) is developing plans for how best to focus that expansion.

You rightly challenged us to look again at the balance given to different offences in the performance regime for the Comprehensive Spending Review. The announcement of the new Public Service Agreements demonstrates a clear focus on tackling the most serious offences, particularly serious violence, in support of our crime strategy. We have also replaced the current offences brought to justice target with a commitment to develop a **shared target for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in bringing offences to justice**. This will allow us to work across agencies to reduce the bureaucratic burden faced by all who work in the CJS, as you recommended.

We shall shortly issue a consultation document on developing the new **Assessment of Policing and Community Safety (APACS)**. You will see that it includes draft measures that respond both to your recommendation on developing "business indicators that show how effectively the police service works and act as benchmarks for good practice" and on giving "proper weight to Neighbourhood Policing outcomes". The **National Indicator Set for local government** has already been published and you will see that it includes, as you recommended, a measure on satisfaction applicable to neighbourhood policing.

Further actions

You make a number of other challenging recommendations, and I shall take each in turn.

On reducing bureaucracy:

- I am, along with my Ministerial colleagues, absolutely committed to delivering **clear national leadership on the responsible assessment of risk**. We are meeting at the National Policing Board on 27 November to discuss your interim report. This will give me, along with my colleagues in the tripartite arrangements, the Association of Police Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers, the chance to consider your advice on how best we can send a clear message to the service about aversion to risk, underpinned by a clear set of actions to return discretion to officers, building on the actions we have already taken above.
- I am happy for the NPB to take a view on the Annual Data Requirement. The ADR itself is overseen with the help of representatives of the police service and they review its working annually. I am keen that the Home Office achieves a 30% reduction in data streams as part of the Better Regulation Sector Strategy and expect that the management of the ADR will contribute to that.
- I am committed to ensuring that our **crime recording rules** are fair and proportionate. I welcome your call for a cross-party debate on the matter and am grateful to you for your offer of facilitating that process.
- I have asked Home Office officials to work with their colleagues in the National Policing Improvement Agency to consider how best to revise our **Activity Based Costing** processes. I know that this is an area

that has prompted considerable concern. I am committed, however, to ensuring that we equip the service with the tools necessary to understand the costs of its different activities so that it will be able to manage its deployment of resources more effectively. As with any management information of course, the costs must be proportionate to the benefits.

On Neighbourhood Policing:

- I have agreed with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears that we will develop the **action plan on neighbourhood management** and the work you recommend on our evidence base. The Home Office and Communities and Local Government have established a group to begin work on a high-level set of actions for the end of the year and are considering how we can develop the pooled budgets and participatory budgeting pilots that you recommend in the context of Hazel's work on community empowerment and engagement.
- The NPIA have begun to assess the feasibility of a **volunteer Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) scheme**. I am keen to consider their advice within a broader debate that we need to have collectively on the next steps necessary to mainstream the excellent work that PCSOs do throughout the country.
- Finally, I am grateful for your recommendation that we should continue **to ring fence funding for PCSOs** for a further year. I shall respond to this formally when I announce the police funding settlement later this year.

I also want to say something at greater length about the **interaction with the rest of the criminal justice system (CJS)**.

The National Criminal Justice Board has discussed your recommendations on **Director's Guidance Quick Process** (Proportionate Prosecution Case File Build) **and virtual courts** and agreed that it will maintain a strong and regular oversight of the development of both programmes. The NPIA and the Office for Criminal Justice Reform have been tasked to report regularly to the Board on the extension of both pilots and to drive the delivery of both programmes as quickly as is consistent with what emerges from this further development work. The **CJS Strategy which was published on 15 November highlights both programmes as leading examples of the work needed to streamline and simplify the criminal justice process and also to give frontline staff a greater say in how the system can best be improved.**

For myself, I am clear – as is the Justice Secretary – that end-to-end efficiencies in the criminal justice system are key to fair and positive outcomes, the confidence of the public and to enabling front line officers and staff to deliver an effective service. Reducing some of the unnecessary bureaucracy in straightforward low-level cases is an issue about which front line officers and staff in the police service feel

particularly concerned. I share that concern. The guiding principle must be that the weight of the process should be proportionate to the seriousness, complexity and likely outcome of the case. I am confident that the pilots of the Proportionate Prosecution Case File and integration of police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) case working teams not only demonstrate the possibilities for saving time and money and speeding a fair judicial outcome, but also help to generate a working culture that enables good decisions to be taken rapidly at each stage of the charging and prosecution process

Both the Justice Secretary and I also share the enthusiasm of the frontline staff that have been instrumental in developing the virtual courts pilot. It offers the prospect of considerable benefits in terms of saving in time and resource in the arrangement of hearings, particularly where all concerned have to travel considerable distances. Those resources can be reinvested in better services. We need now to test the pilot more widely and in a variety of settings - and to work with partners in all parts of the system - so that we develop it in the most effective way

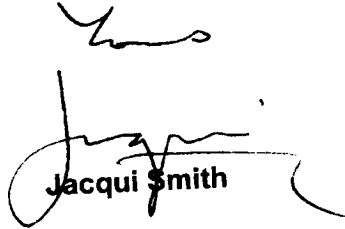
Of course, there are also a number of recommendations made in your report that focus on Chief Constables and ACPO. In order to ensure that we can deliver progress on this challenging set of workstreams before your final report, **I have asked the Home Office to work very closely with the APA, NPIA and with chief constables Matt Baggott and Sir Paul Scott-Lee as they co-ordinate the overall police service response to your report.** I am keen, in particular, that we can use the enthusiasm and goodwill your work so far has produced to consider piloting innovative approaches in specific forces before your final report. I know that colleagues on the National Policing Board will want to be kept up to date as this work progresses.

Your final report

I look forward very much to receiving your final report in January. As I announced at the Superintendents' Association Conference, I will be publishing a Green Paper on policing in the spring and I look forward to being able to respond to your final recommendations in doing so.

In developing your final report, I am particularly keen that you should continue to consider radical proposals for freeing up officer time. As my predecessor set out in his original commissioning letter to you, I look forward to receiving your views on the range of models currently being debated on how best to strengthen local accountability arrangements. I agree with your interim assessment that a step-change in performance will be necessary if the police are to meet public aspirations in a time of slower funding growth. I am keen to hear your views on how the service can produce such a change, which as you say will be achieved only if it fully embraces effective resource management and makes efficient and productive use of all the various resources at its disposal. Finally, it is, of course, important that you consider the implications of your recommendations in Wales and the particular issues and structures that exist following devolution.

I am copying this letter to the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Attorney General, the President of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the National Chairman of the Association of Police Authorities, the President of the Police Superintendents' Association, the Chairman of the Police Federation and to the General Secretary of Unison.


Jacquie Smith