

**CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH
CONSTABLES' CENTRAL CONFERENCE BOURNEMOUTH
TUESDAY 20TH MAY 2008**

I want to start this morning by thanking those officers who came to London at the beginning of the year. We showed immense strength of feeling against the unfair and unjust decision of the Home Secretary not to comply with an independent adjudication on police officer pay.

We also need to remember those officers who didn't attend the rally but continued to police the streets of England and Wales as usual. Thank you to you all.

As police officers we are not a militant group but, we are group who will fight when there is injustice. The whole of the police service, the public, and indeed an awful lot of politicians, know that the Government's decision to ignore the independent arbitration was unjust.

At a time when the new Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, should have been getting to know and understand what policing is about, she set about destroying morale and devaluing the service.

We have made our point, we continue to be professional, because we care about the service and the safety of our communities. The Home Secretary has lost our respect.

She has shown a complete disregard for the role we undertake and, will have to work hard in the future if she is to build any bridges with us.

We need a Home Secretary that we have confidence in, who understands the demands of policing, will support her officers, but most of all we want a fair deal.

Her shaky start has continued, the Home Office have decided that the number of officers injured whilst on duty are of no importance or consequence to them. They will no longer validate this information.

We have a duty of care for every person that we come into contact with, and we take this extremely seriously. The Home Office don't seem to feel they have any duty of care to officers who are injured while protecting the public.

THIS IS SHAMEFUL.

The last figures available showed that 60 officers a day are attacked whilst on duty. If we are to be in a position to properly defend ourselves, we need this information to ensure Constables are properly trained and equipped to defend ourselves and the public.

There is an alternative of course, we could be provided with Taser.

Back in 2003, 5 forces trialled this piece of personal protective equipment.

Despite the fact that there is evidence to show that using Taser reduces both complaints against, and injuries sustained by Constables, the Home office continues to trial the equipment instead of wholesale roll-out of this kit.

Taser is an alternative to the use of lethal force, and Constables deserve nothing less than the best equipment available to deal with knife and gun wielding hoodies. So I ask the Home Secretary to stop dawdling and get on with the roll out of this kit.

At this Conference last year we highlighted that Constables are spending far too long completing unnecessary forms, chasing sanction detections which prevents us from patrolling the streets and providing the high visibility reassurance that our communities want.

Since then it has been universally accepted we were right to raise this as an issue. Flanagan, who was overseeing one of the many reviews into policing, has agreed with us and work is now underway to rid the service of the unnecessary bureaucracy.

This is just one area where the Police Federation have made sensible recommendations on the way forward for policing.

As Constables we know and understand how policing can be delivered more efficiently. Constables have a vested interest in

getting it right and ensuring that all our communities are safe. The Home Office would do well to listen and engage more with Constables.

The majority of police officers in this hall are career constables and very proud of that fact. We love the challenge of investigating crime and disorder, pitching our wits against criminals. Ensuring that evidence is properly gathered, and professionally presented.

What WFM is doing, is removing all the functions we enjoy, thrive on and do so well. It doesn't recognise the added value we bring to the service. We can all look back to the interesting and complex collars we have felt over the years and feel rightly proud that we conducted the investigation from start to finish.

Some forces now have up to 50% of cases not reaching the charging stage. Why, because the prosecution has lost ownership of investigations to the silos.

Defendants still have the luxury of being represented all the way through the case by their dedicated solicitor. Victims of crime are

being let down. They don't know which officer or member of support staff is dealing with their case, they can't speak to anyone who has first hand knowledge of all aspects of it, and they never see any of the prosecutors who will have handled the case. If the government are to put victims at the centre of their criminal justice policy then they need to get this right.

Victims of crime deserve more than being treated as a statistic. They deserve better service from the Criminal Justice System. This can easily be achieved by giving the arresting officer ownership not oversight of the case.

Under WFM pilots, Constables become administrators overseeing the investigation of crime. We are Constables because we are hands on.

If we wanted to oversee cases, and other workers involved in its process, we would apply for promotion and become Sergeants. The traditional function of Constable is being given away, and we are expected to pick up the Sergeant's role. We don't want it, we

see no value in this re-grading of skills for anyone, least of all the people we protect.

The cynic in me thinks that WFM is nothing more than a mechanism to reduce prosecutions and deal with the escalating prison crisis. If criminals aren't getting to Court, they can't be sent to prison and the prison population may just come back under control.

Where does that leave community safety?

Constables across England and Wales are still the envy of the world, this is an achievement that we are rightly proud of.

We need to make sure that we continue to be the **world leaders** in policing.

Modernising the police service without looking at the whole of the criminal justice system is a mistake.

We are now told we have to produce 'more for less'. To achieve this forces are collaborating on a number of projects. Collaborations come at a price for individual officers and are the fore-runner to amalgamations.

Last year we worked with the Home Office to provide sensible guidance on flexible working. We were delighted that the right for all Constables to have a proper work/life balance was finally being recognised. We have a number of concerns about the collaborative agreements. The additional hours that Constables will be away from home, travelling longer distances to and from work, the dangers associated with this after completing a long and stressful shift, and the lack of clear management responsibility for Constables working in other than their home force.

Clear guidance setting out managerial responsibilities for collaborated Constables needs to be published as a matter of urgency.

ACPO must stop shirking their responsibilities.

Not every idea that comes out of the Home Office is a bad idea. They have recently stated that each Ward in England and Wales will have a dedicated neighbourhood policing team. These teams will consist of a Sergeant, Constables and CSOs.

Everyone will have contact via telephone or email with their local team.

This is what policing should be about, indeed back in the 1980s this was what policing **was** about.

Then, Community Constables were based in local police boxes working from within their local communities. They were known and communities felt safe.

It is unfortunate that the last time this was tried the Community Constables weren't so well supported and valued.

Let's hope this time round we have it right.

Right means ensuring that the high visibility patrol is conducted by the Constables. It means police managers ensuring that this worked is valued and that the constables in NPTs are not abstracted constantly to perform other roles.

The success of NPTs relies on the proper resourcing of the response and the general CID teams.

To stop the dilution both these need to be staffed by fully warranted police constables.

The current WFM demonstration sites have given everyone involved in the trials a worrying incite into the current thinking at the Home Office.

The degree to which they think they can replace police constables with civilians right across the service is a Huge concern.

Foe example, The trial in Cheshire where CSOs are going to be patrolling and trying to deliver 'more for the same'!

Here to achieve this Constable numbers will be cut by around 54.

In Hertfordshire a model to look at the investigation of volume crime was established.

However, the Chief Constable has now had a vision (pause) and is looking to widen the project by adding other initiatives to it.

WFM in Herts would appear to be taking a breather before it's even properly started.

What is happening in this force is indicative of WFM projects throughout the country, with plans that have been hastily pulled together and rolled out without any understanding of what the service wants to achieve.

Another case of policing on the cheap.

We will scrutinise each demonstration site as it progresses.

We will ensure any changes to policing are the right changes and are needed to improve the service.

We have a **responsibility** to do this, as it is our members who are left to implement these poorly conceived and ever-changing plans.

I'm not against CSOs. They have a useful role to play in supporting their Police Constable colleagues. But this role is getting hazy, the Home Office is allowing CSOs to be pushed into roles that are neither appropriate nor safe for them to be doing.

The Police Minister tells us that CSOs are what the public want. He even told us at a meeting in Stratford a few months back, that his policy on CSOs was overwhelmingly backed by front line police officers and the public.

Well we decided to put that to the test and ask the public. Last week they were surveyed by YouGov. The results overwhelmingly demonstrate that our communities want Constables on their streets.

58% wanted more constables and fewer CSO's compared to 8% who wanted fewer Constables and more CSOs.

70% felt safer with Constables patrolling as opposed to 4% who felt safer with CSO's patrolling. You don't need me to remind you all that the main remit of the CSO is to provide high visibility re-assurance.

57% said Constables offer better value for money compared to 28% who saw CSO's as better value.

I have to tell the Minister that he is simply wrong.

The public and police service want the same thing, someone who's: responsive, multiskilled, got a 'can do' attitude, and who's trained to deal with any situation they're faced with. They're called a Police Constable.

Communities need Constables

Make no mistake, Constables are wholly in favour of sensible changes to the Service.

We always have been, and will be in the future as new challenges emerge and the police service needs to evolve. But we will never agree to WFM when the basis for change is flawed and ill conceived.

We owe it to the public we dedicate our careers to serve, to stand up and fight to protect the service from these misguided quick-fix policies.

It would appear that far too many opinion formers are set on dismantling the service.

I say to them show it where it is broken, before you try to fix it.

The safety of our communities shouldn't bear the price ticket sold to the lowest bidder.

That is why today we are launching our campaign, Communities need Constables.

Constables are the bedrock of law and order and the heart of policing.

It is time our communities understood and valued the dangerous and difficult role Constables perform. No one knows what society

will throw at us next, but we do know its is the Constable who will
rush in while others run away.

That is why communities need constables.

Thank you Conference.