

Police Pay and Conditions Review

Initial Submission from Lord Blair of Boughton

I am most grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the initial scoping of the Review. There are a very large number of topics raised in the sample questions attached to the Reviewer's letter, about many of which others will be much better placed to comment. I will confine myself to a few major issues as they seemed to me as Commissioner.

The need for simplicity

Over many years, the police service has allowed its regulatory arrangements to become overcomplicated. That begins with the Police Negotiating Board, with its enormous number of non-speaking participants and a tendency to negotiate over minutiae.

What is needed is some framework of basic agreement. I would propose the following:-

1. Preserve the statutory ban on strike and other industrial action.
2. As a consequence, ensure that there is a transparent mechanism for police officer pay, not necessarily as generous as Edmund Davies, but with binding arbitration. Police officer pay should be comparable with other parts of the public sector but enhanced to reflect danger and the inability to strike.
3. In relation to police staff, pay arrangements (but not necessarily pay levels) should be designed to match as closely as possible to these conditions, including the negotiation of temporary (3-5 year), renewable non-strike agreements.
4. Do away with almost all of the additional payments for all ranks, including performance rewards for Superintendents and Chief Officers and Special Priority Payments: retain only those that involve obvious extra expense like keeping a dog, although return to some payments for particularly unpleasant tasks.

5. Assuming that an agreed set of professional training requirements is established (preferably in the shape of something like Continual Professional Development, as in the case of solicitors), then individuals should receive extra payment, not for length of service alone, after probation, but for skills acquired and responsibilities undertaken. It should be possible for an individual to gain extra remuneration by remaining as a certifiably competent front line constable at least equal to the next level of promotion (and equivalently thereafter up the rank scale).
6. The rank structure should be simplified. It is simply absurd that there should be eleven separate ranks between constable and Commissioner.
7. Shift allowances should be withdrawn from all those who do not work 24 hour round the clock shifts. Anyone who has worked that rota knows its deleterious impact on well-being and family life. Care should be taken that this does not lead to a preponderance of late evening shifts for individuals.
8. Overtime should be seen for what it is: an efficient way of delivering services. Overtime does not take holidays, require training or go sick. However, within reasonable limits, overtime should only be available to those officers who do not control their own destiny, who are forced to undertake it through unforeseeable circumstances such as service on a surveillance unit or after an arrest. Professionals in most disciplines are prepared to work longer than a forty hour week. More use should be made of additional payment instead of overtime for roles, like protection officers or officers leading homicide units, where exceptionally long hours are a proven norm. Others will no doubt speak with passion over the need to protect people from their own over enthusiasm or exploitation.
9. **Above all, however, the crucial issue is a long term decision to remodel the police workforce. We need to move from a service divided sharply between a majority of fully trained and fully warranted police officers to a position where a significant body of fully trained and fully warranted officers are retained but, over time, the service recruits and deploys a larger number of officers warranted only to undertake parts of the job. PCSO's are the first example of this sort of uniformed officer in contact with the public but many more could be envisaged, including investigative**

assistants to the CID and forensic accountancy staff. Fully trained and fully warranted officers should then only be employed in roles that require both their skills and powers most of the time.

10.What this means, of course, is that the concentration on officer numbers as an indication of police effectiveness must end. The police should account instead for the number of uniform staff working in public space.

11. Moving lastly to pensions, the anomalous position of the police should be made clear, with the public being made more aware of the 11% contribution being made by officers, way out of line with the much lower contributions in other parts of the public service.

The decision has already been made to move recent entrants to a 35 year pension scheme. In the meantime, the invidious position of the remaining officers with a 30 year pension scheme needs sensible recognition. At the moment, the majority of officers leave at 30 years because they are then enabled to draw both a lump-sum commutation and their pension and obtain another job (anything, including working as police staff, but not as a police officer {except those few retained on the 30-plus scheme}).

Moreover, their remuneration from the police in retirement becomes less as they stay on because the commutation calculations are so devised.

Often, this means they retire at the height of their professional expertise, often when they would prefer not to, and their skills are lost to the service. They then need to be replaced by new officers, who need recruitment and training. This is both financially and professionally ridiculous. The bullet has to be bitten and those officers of appropriate skills and energy encouraged and allowed to take their pension and then remain in the service.

There should be no additional cost (provided point 5 above is enacted and service length increments are abolished) and indeed savings from HR costs should accrue. Short term contracts should be introduced for this additional period of service, with annual appraisal to ensure continuing suitability for retention and perhaps an additional saving of something like a 10% reduction in monthly pension payment to reflect the convenience of this arrangement to the individual. This system would fade away as the 35 year pension officers advance through the years.

There are many other issues of merit to discuss but this would be the basis of my initial suggestions.