



Home Office

Rt Hon Nick Herbert MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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To: Police Officers in England and Wales

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Dear Colleagues

Policing is an essential public service that will always have the support of this Government. As the Home Secretary and I visit forces around the country and talk to officers, we are constantly impressed by the work you do for your communities, and it gives us enormous pride. You put yourselves in harm's way and are often the service of last resort, picking up the pieces and maintaining your professionalism throughout.

All organisations have to keep pace with the modern world, and the whole country is facing economic difficulties which are affecting policing, too. I know that the spending reductions which police forces are required to make are challenging, but they are necessary. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has set out that savings of over £1 billion a year can be made while maintaining the service to the public. The two-year pay freeze and better procurement will help to make further savings.

I appreciate that there is concern about the reductions in the number of officers and the wider changes that are being made, including proposed reforms of pay and conditions. So I wanted to set out our approach to these issues.

First, we want to recognise the professionalism of police officers.

I believe that police officers are professionals and should be recognised as such. I also believe that officers deserve the best training to equip them for the challenges they face, allow them to develop their skills and professionalism, and invest in their future.

That is why we are working with the service to create a new Police Professional Body, for all the ranks and including staff, which will be led by the service itself, to ensure that officers have the right training and skills for the future. When the

Professional Body is set-up, it will not charge individual officers or staff fees for membership or require a licence to practise.

Second, we want to reduce bureaucracy to make it easier to do your job.

By ending central targets and trusting the discretion and skills of officers as highly trained professionals, we can move away from the bureaucratic culture which has grown in policing.

Working with forces and officers, we are doing everything we can to eliminate unnecessary form-filling and red tape, and we are setting up a new police ICT company, to be owned by police and crime commissioners, dedicated to improved ICT.

Third, we want to ensure that police officers continue to be rewarded for the exceptional job you do.

We are having to take difficult decisions across the public sector on pay and pensions. It would not be right to exempt police officers from this.

The lion's share of the savings to police forces come from the two year pay freeze which applies across the public sector. The savings from Winsor Part One are less than 2 per cent of the total officer pay bill, and the Part Two proposals do not take money out of the overall pay bill in the short term.

However, I appreciate that there are concerns about some of Winsor's Part Two proposals. As you know, these are being discussed in formal negotiations through the police negotiating machinery.

We believe it is right in principle to reward officers for the job they do and the skills they have rather than time served. But we will take great care to ensure that police officers are fairly treated. And we will continue to ensure that officers are rewarded for the exceptional job you do:

- Police officers will continue to earn more than other emergency services.
- Police officers (constables and sergeants) will continue to be able to earn overtime, which is not available to prison officers or the armed forces, who also cannot strike.
- Police officers will continue to retire earlier than most in the public sector.
- Police pensions will continue to be amongst the best available.

The pensions contribution increase for the majority of police officers from April this year was 1.25 per cent - in line with the average across the funded public service pension schemes, with the exception of the armed forces. We are also committed to protecting those who were within ten years of their current Normal Pension Age on 1 April this year from the full impact of the longer term reforms. So we have treated police officers fairly.

Fourth, we will ensure that any proposed changes are properly discussed.

One of the Government's first acts was to honour the third year of the previous police pay deal, and - as the Police Federation requested - we agreed to accept the Police Arbitration Tribunal's award on the Winsor Part One proposals.

We will continue to ensure that any changes to pay and conditions are fully discussed with your representatives, and we will always listen to constructive advice.

Fifth, policing will continue to be a public service, accountable to the people.

Police forces have been using the private sector to deliver some of their services for a number of years now. If forces cannot make savings through such innovation, there will ultimately be fewer police officer jobs.

These decisions are taken by chief constables and approved by police authorities or, from November, elected Police and Crime Commissioners, so there is full and proper accountability.

Private contractors are not, and will not be, permitted to exercise the powers of arrest and detention given to sworn officers, beyond the limited detention and escort functions already allowed. Policing is, and will remain, a public service, and the office of constable will remain the bedrock.

Finally, we will continue to value the finest police service in the world.

Police officers do difficult and often dangerous work, and cannot strike. I am determined that we recognise this, treat officers fairly and pay them well.

But we also need to update the service to ensure that the hardest-working officers doing the most difficult jobs will be rewarded, and to acknowledge and reward professional skills and continued development.

Today we have announced legislation to create the National Crime Agency and I will shortly be launching plans to promote swift and sure justice, ensuring that we have a criminal justice system which backs the police up and makes it easier for you to do your job. We want the strongest possible police service with the powers to fight crime.

We must take some tough decisions and do the right thing for the whole country. But I want to assure officers that we will continue to value, in the Prime Minister's words, the finest police service in the world.

*Yours sincerely
Nick Herbert.*

NICK HERBERT