Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Alan Beveridge

In response to the current review of policing, please note my personal concerns. I am a local councillor and a retired police officer, stationed for 30 years operational in North Lanarkshire, former N Division.

I have concerns regarding the present review of the opening hours for police offices. The proposal for N division will see 24 hour police offices in Motherwell and Hamilton, approximately three miles apart, surely a more beneficial approach would have offices open at each end of the division, if indeed any have to close, like for example Hamilton and Coatbridge. If indeed offices had to close I presume there would be some facility for telephoning in an emergency, whilst this is not ideal it is better than nothing and might help to alleviate some of the public concern.

I note also that your proposal states the revised opening hours will release police officers onto the street, this I believe is inaccurate. At present more and more police officers are being taken from operation street duties in order to manage various office based, administrative, statistical gathering roles. These roles can and should, and indeed were in a previous regime deemed to be done by civilian employees. Like for example the serving of citations that should never be the function of operational police officers to do, it would be disgraceful if civilian staff were removed from this role.

Prior to the inception of the Scottish Police Authority I was a member of Strathclyde Police Authority for a short time. During this time I acquired figures from the then executive relative to officers that were on light, non-operation, duties. These figures were alarmingly high, on average 300 to 400 constables being paid up to £36,000 per annum. I have investigated what their light duties involved and was shocked, Constables for anything up to 2 to 3 years idly wasting their time, and the tax payers money doing meaningless jobs, which in turn effected their moral, merely to fill in their days. In most of these occasion, like I suggested these officers could easily back fill civilian posts, especially night shift police offices and thus provide a service. There is no reason, given the will by the present executive this cannot still be considered.

I am totally opposed to the closure of police offices for various reasons, it will affect the service that is presently given to the public. I have looked at your statistics and the time scale when the visits were recorded, for such a major decision as this I would have thought that a more comprehensive analysis would have been sought, by a company with no vested interest. The Scottish Police Service motto of "Keeping People Safe" is beginning to mean nothing in light of these proposals. The present management regime seem to forget the word service, as opposed to business. Policing never was and should never be a business, but I fear for the future of policing as we know it. Police managers are ambassadors, ambassadors for a service our fore fathers established to "Keep People Safe", they did, they had the
trust of the public, they policed by consent, free from the Key Performance Indicator performance culture that police managers have developed.

I appeal to the present managers of police, speak to your officers, moral is at an all-time low and it is, in part, due to the present management regime. Response policing numbers are seriously depleted. Officers are encouraged to leave the beat as soon as possible to enhance their career, how many officers for example are promoted from working shifts on response policing, none, this role is demeaned. There are less and less officers involved in front line policing. I and many of the residents I represent have witnessed a mark decrease on the number of police officers on the streets of our towns.

There is no doubt police managers know the cost of policing but they appear not to understand the value of policing to the people of Scotland, I fear for the direction and future of our once great service, what next, policing on the cheap, PCSOs like south of the border?

Alan Beveridge
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