Justice Sub-Committee on Policing

Impact of police reform on local policing

Written submission from Andrew McMillan

May I say with due respect to you and the whole committee that you have a bit of a nerve in now asking for the views of the public on the creation of a single police service. Why was the public not consulted in advance of the process to create the Police Service of Scotland? It was clear that the general public across the whole of Scotland did not want the eight forces amalgamated into one so why was this ignored?

The single national force has been created and will have to be a success because there is no going back! That success will be shown in the fullness of time and frankly to ask the public and other interested parties what they think of things after only 6 months or so is a bit ridiculous. As someone who served 30 years in the police I have some knowledge and understanding of these matters and have strong views but I am hardly able to comment in detail on the actual impact on local policing so far because it is too early to judge.

All I can say is that police station counters have been closed, that long serving dedicated and valuable staff have been paid off and that morale among the remaining staff is at rock bottom. I hear about local officers driving about desperate to issue Fixed Penalty Tickets to meet their senior officer's KPI requirements. I hear and read in the local newspapers about rising crime but am confused because the police say all is well and things have never been better! I see and hear about constables having to do the jobs of civilian staff who have been paid off, in some situations, reversing the civilisation of such tasks by some twenty or thirty years! I see the scrapping of the tried and tested Traffic Warden system leaving the police in the ridiculous position of trying to explain and defend the fact that they cannot police long established parking zones in town centres. I also read that local authorities are having to consider employing their own traffic wardens to 'police' the streets because chaos is predicted. It is a funny way to save money by transferring the cost from the police budget to a Council budget! The public still have to pay for it!

Finally can I say Convenor that to have a single Chief Constable in Scotland is not a healthy situation. I will say no more on that subject but I am certain I am not alone in having grave doubts about such a situation.

Andrew McMillan
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