

## Police and crime commissioners

Version 3

### 1. Policy statement

The advent of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners heralded the beginning of a new era for British policing. PCCs replaced police authorities with the intention that they would increase public accountability by concentrating oversight of police forces in a single individual with a mandate to get the best outcomes for the public. However, nearly four years on, some ambiguities in the accountability framework remain which may contribute to tensions between commissioners, chief constables and police and crime panels.

PFEW believes that all stakeholders and partners across the criminal justice sector should work together to do whatever they can to ensure the continued delivery of the best police service in the world. We hope PCCs will champion the following:

- The office of constable should remain the basis of modern policing
- Police forces should be sufficiently resourced so that the public get the service they expect
- We need a clearer vision and consultation over the future of the police service
- Morale amongst police officers needs a much needed boost
- Prioritise public safety not profit

### 2. Responsibility

The National Board is responsible for all policy formation.

### 3. Summary

PFEW supports attempts to ensure full and proper mechanisms are in place to protect and maintain public accountability in the police service. A National Audit Office report on police accountability<sup>1</sup> identified a number of areas where ambiguity remains. These include: the role and ability of police and crime panels to hold PCCs to account; the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS); the ability of local communities to address issues arising with a PCC's performance or conduct in between elections; and the publication of information to enable the public to scrutinise the performance of police forces and to hold PCCs to account.

We note that there is a potential gap in the framework because HMICFRS does not have the statutory authority to routinely inspect commissioners or their offices. This should be rectified by the Home Office. Previously, HMICFRS had the power to inspect police authorities. PCCs are

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<sup>1</sup> Police accountability: landscape review, NAO, 2014

increasingly taking over functions such as estate management. More importantly, PCCs are responsible for allocating funds from the Community Safety Fund to address local crime reduction and community safety priorities. This includes commissioning services to support victims, witnesses and vulnerable people. Whilst HMICFRS includes information on such spending in its value for money reports it has no routine power to scrutinise this expenditure – this cannot be right.

In addition, whilst PCCs are accountable to the local electorate for the discharge of their functions, with elections held every four years, there is no system by which the local electorate can recall a PCC if they fail to fulfil their duties. The powers of local police and crime panels are limited. This should be addressed by the Home Office otherwise it may be impossible for local people or police and crime panels to address any issues arising from a PCC's performance or conduct.

It is vital that police officers are impartial and accountable for their actions and that they do not become subject to political whim and electioneering. The office of constable ensures operational independence of the police service and maintains the integrity, impartiality and accountability of operational policing. PFEW believes that the Home Office should keep the Policing Protocol under review to ensure local roles and responsibilities are clear to reduce the likelihood of tensions between a PCC and the police force and to ensure that the office of constable is not eroded.

PFEW urges all PCCs to maintain budget and staffing levels that will ensure that the safety and security of the public and our members is not compromised. In particular, PFEW believes that victims of crime are suffering with a poorer service because of cuts to the police budget. PCCs are responsible for commissioning services to support victims in the aftermath of a crime and should conduct victims' needs assessments to help inform the provision of services to victims to support more victims of crime and to meet the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

The police service in England and Wales continues to face enormous changes for example through force collaboration arrangements, the College of Policing's Leadership review, the Home Secretary's proposals for emergency services collaboration in England or the National Police Chief Council's proposals for members terms and conditions. We would like to see more meaningful consultation with stakeholders including PFEW and the public, to make sure that the right reforms are made and that forces have time to adapt to changes. We have yet to see any model of policing that clarifies what is essential and what is desirable – until this has been delivered, valuable resources and ultimately taxpayers' money will continue to be poured into the wrong things. For many years PFEW has called for a Royal Commission, or similar root and branch review of the police. Piecemeal reform only ever addresses short term issues and creates instability.

People are the most precious resources in the police service. It is crucial therefore that they are motivated, focussed and made to feel that their contribution is valued so the public gets the service they expect and officers views are taken into account. We hope PCCs will not only represent the needs and wants of the public but will, in consultation with the Federation, speak up for officers and highlight the positive work they do and the difference they make to their communities.

Outsourcing has a role to play in the police service for technical support and provision of some back office functions. Driven by budget cuts, the service is being pressed to sell off parts of the service to organisations who want to make a profit. This represents a fundamental shift in the way policing is delivered and indeed the very foundations on which British policing has been built with the result

that there will be less accountability, less independence and a less flexible workforce. The most efficient workforce is one that can be called upon at short notice, who is trained and experienced in a broad range of functions so that they can cover any role in any part of the country at any time – in other words a fully warranted police officer.

Policing needs to remain public – with the consent of the people. We hope PCCs, as representatives of members of the public, will fully engage in a well-informed, open and honest debate about the future of the service.

**4. Procedures/implementation**

Responsibility is delegated to the National Secretary and/or the appropriate sub-committee.

PFEW will press the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and individual PCCs to engage with PFEW both nationally and locally to ensure that the views of officers are considered when PCCs are exercising their powers.

PFEW will respond to consultations on the roles and responsibilities of PCCs.

	Author	Date	Date to be reviewed	Change
Version 1	EP-KP	March 2016	March 2017	
Version 2	EP-KP	March 2017	March 2018	No change
Version 3	KP	January 2019	March 2020	Minor changes

**Signed by:**



National Chair



National Secretary