

Concern over who will provide half a billion shortfall for community support officers

More than half a billion pounds will have to be found to pay for community support officers, according to Ray Pattenden, secretary of Sussex Police Federation.

The force has one of the biggest intakes of community support officers outside of London and the move has prompted a positive response, but also concerns over who will be expected to foot the bill for their wages when funding from the Government comes to an end.

Mr Pattenden told the Sussex Police Federation open meeting, held last month in Brighton, that £625 million would have to be found to fund the Government's target to have 25,000 CSOs in place in forces across the country by 2008.

He added: 'At the same time forces are required to make year



Funding gap: Ray Pattenden, general secretary of Sussex Police Federation

on year efficiency savings. So, from a shrinking budget, we are expected to maintain officer numbers and take on more CSOs. Where is the money going to come from?'

The Government has already released £50 million for 2,000 CSOs, but this is due to run out in

2006 and concerns are mounting about where the future funding will come from.

Mr Pattenden added that the call for releasing more officers onto the streets, by replacing those in desk jobs with civilians, will inevitably lead to a decrease in police numbers as chief constables 'cannot spend the money twice' when it comes to police numbers.

'We are already being told that police officers do not spend enough time on the streets but gradually their functions are being taken away by one police staff or another,' said Mr Pattenden.

But he also spoke directly to a number of CSOs in the audience and said 'officers need and appreciate what you provide (CSOs) but also that you should be there to support us and not supplant us.'



Terrorists could slip through system if police custody sergeants are replaced



Sgt Julian Clapp

Terrorist suspects could end up slipping through the net if police custody sergeants are replaced by civilians, according to Sgt Julian Clapp.

The officer, from Sussex Police, who represents custody officers in his role as a federation representative, said 'the thought of a terrorist being dealt with by police staff doesn't bare thinking about.'

Sgt Clapp spoke to a 200-strong audience at the Sussex Police Federation conference, held last month, following plans laid out in the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act to civilianise the role.

The Federation fought against the proposals nationally and lobbied to remove the clause, emphasising the vast legal knowledge and experience police custody sergeants bring as 'guardians' of the criminal justice system.

Sgt Clapp said: 'The prospect of a terrorist prisoner being brought into a custody centre with all the complex procedures and laws that apply to dealing with somebody of that nature does not bare thinking about.'

Sussex Police has around 72 police custody officers and there are more than a 1,000 nationally who provide the expert support needed to make crucial decisions about whether a person is set free or detained.

Currently Sussex Police has detention supervisors who are not police officers but they work in partnership with expert police custody officers.

Police officers 'no knowledge' of jargon documents which hold key to future of service

Only four out of 200 officers at a straw poll in Sussex said they had read 'wordy' key documents which could affect the future of the police service.

Brian Stockham, chairman of the Sussex Police Federation, said that they were there to help guide officers and make them aware of how their everyday jobs could be affected by the contents of the documents, which could provide blueprints for changes in the future of the police service.

'All of these documents will have an impact on you in the workplace sometime soon. We were shocked and horrified at what we read,' Mr Stockham told officers at a meeting of the Sussex Police Federation in Brighton last month.

Only four officers were left standing as he asked those who

had not read the report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary entitled *Modernising the Service*, to sit down.

The report, published in July last year, suggests civilianisation of roles currently carried out by police officers and merging pay and conditions.

Only two officers were left still standing when Mr Stockham asked if anyone had managed to work their way through the Government's *Building Safer Communities* and not a single officer had managed to wade through the ACPOS' *Policing in the 21st Century*.

Mr Stockham said that Sir Ian Blair had made reference to his belief that police officers and civilians alike in the police service are 'all crime fighters', but the



Brian Stockham, chairman of the Sussex Federation

Federation chairman emphasised that it is constables who have a unique status.

'Police officers are unique and special and their place in society should stay unique and special,' he said, pointing out that a constable cannot strike and is bound to act even when off duty.

