


View from the chair

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation questions why ACPO are turning policing into profit

A portrait of Paul McKeever, a middle-aged man with short brown hair, wearing a dark pinstriped suit jacket, a light blue and white striped shirt, and a purple tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred office setting.

“This is about the integrity of the entire police service; a service that prides itself on political independence and fair and impartial execution of duty. Not a business whose priority is to maximise profit at every opportunity.”

Over two consecutive weekends last month the *Mail on Sunday* newspaper revealed how the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has transformed itself from an old-fashioned talking shop for senior officers into a dynamic business conglomerate with an annual turnover in excess of £18 million a year.

Besides turning itself into a Private Limited Company, it has spawned several other PLCs, all making a handsome profit, apparently immune from the economic blizzard that has driven hundreds of other companies to the wall. This income comes mainly from central government, speed cameras, criminal record checks and private security firms.


The directors of ACPO PLC are all serving chief officers, who are unpaid. The company employs a number of former senior officers on lucrative contracts, which might be good news for senior officers nearing retirement when prospects of outside employment are less rosy than they used to be but does little to instil public confidence in policing for the two and a half million *Mail on Sunday* readers.

ACPO has declared its intention “to continue to develop business activities to ensure that the ACPO brand name is recognised globally as a mark of excellence in policing”. To this end, one of the subsidiary companies, ACPO Crime Prevention Initiatives endorses new products with the ACPO seal of “Secured by Design” licences. Last year, this company made £225, 000 profit after paying £42,500 to its managing director, former chief constable of Lincolnshire, Richard Childs.

Another ACPO company is chaired by Meredydd Hughes, chief constable of South Yorkshire, who is unpaid for this role. The company provides secretarial and professional support, including lawyers to challenge “Mr Loophole” defences in speed-camera cases. ACPO has another nice little earner in ACRO –the ACPO Criminal Records Office – from the sale, at up to £70 a time, of criminal record certificates to applicants for visas to the USA, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Such applicants used to pay just £10 for these certificates, and each PNC check costs ACRO just 60 pence. After paying its managing director, former Hampshire deputy chief constable Ian Redhead £50,000 last year, ACRO handed £200,000 to ACPO.

ACPOs most recent accounts reveal a significant annual surplus and an accumulated fund of over £15million in assets and £9 million in cash. ACPO claim this money is earmarked for projects to tackle serious and strategic threats on behalf of the service. It also helps to finance major investigations in small forces, such as the Soham murders. I daresay the financial success of ACPO will come as a surprise to many frontline police officer colleagues struggling to contend with rising food prices and utility bills. The real issue here is whether ACPO should be operating as a company. I note in *Police Review* ACPO President, Sir Ken Jones, makes clear that policing is a service and not a business. I couldn't agree more but how does this sit with that particular ethos?

Criticising the hard endeavours of police officers and knocking policing at every opportunity is already a pastime for national newspaper editors without ACPO serving up such an appetising dish on a plate for them. This is about the integrity of the entire police service; a service that prides itself on political independence and fair and impartial



Police Certificate Application Guidance Notes
These notes apply to those applicants wishing to obtain an immigration visa for Australia, Canada, New Zealand or the United States of America

The Association of Chief Police Officers Criminal Records Office (ACRO) will aim to produce all Police Certificates (standard service) within 10 working days. This will be measured from the day the application is accepted by ACRO, to the day of dispatch (see also urgent requests).

The completed application form will be processed and the results sent directly to you at your current address as quoted on the application form or to another address as requested by you.

To help to avoid errors, the application form should be completed in clear BLOCK CAPITALS.

ACRO will carry out extensive authentication exercises including searching various databases.

The following factors are likely to delay the processing of a Certificate:

- Incomplete information provided
- Inability to authenticate your current address
- Failure to enclose correct payment
- You are subject of impending/outstanding criminal proceedings
- An event or occurrence outside of ACRO's control, for example a postal strike or computer systems failure.

To minimise the risk of errors ACRO have developed administrative procedures and safeguards including the right of appeal and a formal dispute procedure. You should contact ACRO if you dispute the content of your Police Certificate (see page 2 for contact details)

ACRO will initiate the formal dispute procedure if there is an alleged error in the criminal history information including:

- Disputed Identity (The whole record is incorrect)
- Accuracy (Yes that's me, but some of the details are wrong)
- Relevance (Why is that on the Certificate?)

If an error occurs due to illegible handwriting, a new Certificate will be issued at a cost of £5.

Please ensure the form is completed using BLOCK CAPITALS.

Proof of Identity: ACRO require a copy of your passport description page (usually carrying your photograph) and 2 items of correspondence, no more than 6 months old, that confirm your current address, e.g. utility bills, such as a phone bill, gas bill, electricity bill or bank statement. (Do NOT send originals, they will not be returned)

If you are living outside the UK you need to provide confirmation of your current residential address, together with a list of previous UK addresses within the last 5 years.

Urgent Requests: If you require your Police Certificate urgently, the Premium Service* will provide this in 2 working days (excludes days of receipt and dispatch). Note - £70 fee applies.

If you are the subject of impending/outstanding criminal proceedings, you will not be eligible for the premium service.


Fees (in Pounds Sterling):
 Standard Service - £35.00 (10 working days)
 Premium Service - £70.00 (2 working days)
 Additional Copy (ies) £5.00 each

Payment must be by UK Bank Cheque, UK Postal Order, or Bankers Draft. **Please note - cash will not be accepted.**

Payments should be made payable to HPA.

If your payment is not cleared, your Certificate will be deemed invalid and the appropriate Embassy/High Commission will be notified.

Additional Copies: If you require more than one copy of the Certificate, please submit £5 for each additional copy. Additional copies can only be provided at the time of the original application. Subsequent requests for extra copies will require a new application.



A POLICE CERTIFICATE IS PROVIDED FOR THE AGREED SPECIFIED PURPOSE OF OBTAINING A CONSULAR CERTIFICATE FOR IMMIGRATION PURPOSES. KEEP THE DATA SECURE AND PROTECT THEM AGAINST LOSS OR UNAUTHORISED ACCESS.

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Money maker: criminal records certificates from ACRO cost up to £70 a time

execution of duty. Not a business whose priority is to maximise profit at every opportunity.

If this is not about greed and ACPO truly need to raise money for operational policing this way then serious questions must be asked about the level of funding given by government. I appreciate ACPO are part of the tripartite system of policing together with the Association of Police Authorities and the Home Office, but if things are really this bad then they have a duty to do what's right for public safety and blow the whistle on the irresponsible and dangerously low level of funding.

Home Secretary: should ACPO be asking for more funds instead of pursuing business interests



Photography: PAPhotos