



Steve Edwards, chairman of Lancashire Police Federation

Local focus

Both Lancashire and Cumbria police authorities have agreed to 'volunteer' to amalgamate, subject to some assurances being provided by the Home Office, most notably in relation to council tax harmonisation. Our council tax precept is far lower than our neighbours in Cumbria.

The majority of our members are looking forward to the merger and, indeed, we are expecting a voluntary merger on April 1, 2007. However, there is disappointment that the Home Office seems to be dragging its heels on the issues already identified for resolution before both authorities fully commit themselves.

We understand the police authorities' position on this and can only urge the Home Office to resolve its own internal matters and provide us with the required assurances as soon as possible, so that both the force and the federation can get on with planning and agreeing the way forward for the new Cumbria and Lancashire Constabulary.

Both forces' federations are meeting on a regular basis to try and decide our future representation in the new force, the emphasis being on providing the best possible service to our members. We are involved in the amalgamation process and have a representative sitting on all the different 'work stream' boards and on the main project board, to try and ensure that our members best interests are brought to the fore on any issues of concern.

An early issue, that has proved quite emotive, is the potential change in collar numbers. It would appear that there are at least a few hundred 'duplicate' collar numbers between the two existing forces which will need sorting out prior to the merger. We have received several proposals on how to address this particular matter and these are out for discussion and consultation with our representatives at the moment, but I can tell you that some officers are very protective of their existing number.

The other main issue of concern is one of the potential transfers of officers outside their current force area after the merger; bearing in mind the geography of the new proposed force, this would inevitably cause our members

numerous problems. We have already raised this issue with both our existing chief constable and the chairman of the police authority, who were both very sympathetic and understanding of our concerns and gave us their assurances that 'unreasonable' transfers would not be on their agendas.

We are grateful for that assurance but once a new chief constable is selected 'all bets may be off', which again is why we would urge the Home Office to sort out their problems, then the selection process can start and we can start negotiating with the new chief constable and new police authority.

Electric stun guns.

The Police Federation membership survey, published in May, revealed that 86 per cent of our members believe that Taser should either be issued to all frontline officers or that it should be more widely issued to an increased number of officers.

Using these results, we have commenced discussions with the force about the extension of the issue and use of Taser to more officers so that it is more readily available for use in operational circumstances. The knock-on effect, we hope, being the reduction in the number of injuries our members sustain in confrontations with members of the public.

We are committed to representing our members' views and, as such, we will continue to discuss this matter with the force over the coming months.