



Kieran Diamond, chairman of Surrey Police Federation

## Storm of change is on the way

# Local Focus

A political storm is building up over the horizon and heading this way. Those in power have already asserted their authority by shouting a 'warning' of its approach.

As the police service bunkers down in readiness for the dreaded maelstrom, there is a need for greater accountability, significant reductions in targets, improvements in productivity, less bureaucracy, police reform and a review of police pensions. Some might say that it's the same old sea shanty that we've all heard before, a regurgitation of political rhetoric in readiness for the tidal wave of 'change' to hit the shore.

### **The National Police Federation works well for all our members; is it not time to revisit the national police service debate?**

It comes as neither a revelation nor a shock that change is inevitable. The police service needs to be a flexible, evolving institution with greater accountability, providing an efficient, effective and economic service. So what's new about that? I honestly believe we as an organisation continuously work hard at delivering value for money and will remain to do so in the future. But this can only be achieved with good governance, transparency, and all parties working together.

Surrey has continuously adapted to change over the past 20 years. As a force we've been extremely pioneering in dealing with demands, accountability and budget short falls. The organisation has also made some fundamental errors which, in fairness, have been resolved one way or another. The force has always frantically tried to predict the outcome of change, usually by salami-slicing departments to overcome a threat or problem.

The actions and attitudes of politicians and senior managers (especially now) are critical in determining whether the police service can sustain its resilience in the future. So why are we getting mixed messages after listening to the recent ACPO conference? It's quite simple – if forces continue to take a fragmented

approach and start haemorrhaging police officers, how could they ever be expected to maintain public confidence? The service is reliant on goodwill because through police officers' endeavours and sense of duty we have always delivered.

The carnage and debris is starting to build up on the shore. Some smaller forces are already struggling to manage mutual aid demands because of insufficient resources on the ground. This was recently highlighted by the shootings by Derrick Bird in Cumbria and Raoul Moat in Northumbria.

The Olympic Games is now on the horizon. There are real concerns over whether the service is fit for purpose in policing such an event. So how can we as a service manage such incidents in the future, without incurring overtime or exhausting our staff?

History has taught us that during times of uncertainty the political storm will eventually pass, but may leave irreparable damage in its wake. Policing needs to change if it is to meet the challenges of the modern world. The service lacks strategic vision and should redefine its jigsaw approach, as 43 different ways no longer works.

We have learnt much already about the advantages of strategic alliance and regionalisation. The national Police Federation works well for all our members; is it not time to revisit the national police service debate? The country requires strong leadership and the police service, now more than ever, needs a clear strategic blueprint for policing in the future.

So before each force starts building its own shore-line defences, remember – the wall may not be high enough to absorb the impact of the series of tsunamis heading this way.