



Chris Burrows, chairman of Manchester Police Federation

A time for change

Greater Manchester Police may be one of the largest forces but many of the issues that affect us on a day-to-day basis are those that impact on officers all across the country. The constant increase in demand on frontline police seems to be accompanied with a decline in officers available to attend incidents, not an increase. Despite various projects and policing methods there never seems to be an improvement in staffing levels for response teams. I understand the reasoning behind neighbourhood policing and the direction in which forces, including my own, are being driven by the government but no one should forget that we are an emergency service and when an emergency happens we should have sufficient staff to deal with it quickly and safely.

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The recent appointment of our new chief constable, Peter Fahy, and of other members of our senior command team will no doubt bring changes in GMP and we are waiting to see what those will be. The initial indications are that Mr Fahy is taking into account the views of officers he has spoken to but the challenge he faces is to be able to respond. A good example is the custody and charging process which just seems to put hurdle after hurdle in an arresting officers way, from queuing to get prisoners booked in, dealing with evidence review officers and CPS advice, all of which has extended beyond acceptable bounds in terms of the time it takes someone to deal with the simplest of offences. Police officers want to be on the streets doing their jobs not tied up in process driven systems.

Another issue in our force is the reduction in strength of our dog handlers which was controversial as we went from 130 only a couple of years ago to our current level of 35. We believe this to be a woefully inadequate number for a metropolitan force and made our point at the time.

Although we do not expect Mr Fahy to revisit all the decisions made prior to his appointment, there are some that a new pair of eyes may see differently.

A time of change then for our force and an opportunity for the Federation to influence decisions that are made. It is also a chance for our members to be heard at an early stage and our Open Meeting in the city centre on November 27 will be a forum where members can speak directly to us, national Federation representatives, the chief and the chairman of the police authority. I hope they take that opportunity.

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