

Minister calls for new ideas, not more money

The effectiveness of a police force should not be measured by the number of police officers it employs, according to Nick Herbert MP, minister for Policing and Criminal Justice.

Speaking to think-tank Policy Exchange, Mr Herbert said the ‘old numbers game’ was a fraud on the public and called for ‘an honest reappraisal of what counts as success in law and order policy’. He also said a new approach was needed, rather than more money.

“We need new thinking about how to deliver better outcomes – thinking which doesn’t start from the assumption that more cash is the only answer, or that old, under-utilised buildings are indispensable to criminal justice.

“There are ways other than old-fashioned, under-visited police stations for the police to have a footprint or base in their communities – sharing community premises, or a shop front on the local parade.

“And we need better ways to spend the money we have. Because the truth is that, even if resources were flowing freely into and out of the Treasury (and they are not), reinforcing failing systems with more cash won’t produce the results.”

In his speech, Mr Herbert hinted that new methods of measuring crime would be announced shortly as the public did not believe the current crime figures.

“We desperately need measures of crime and a process of publishing the information in which the public can have confidence, which we can all agree about, and which give us a clear and meaningful picture of what’s happening.”

A new Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill is also set to be published which the minister said would ‘build a strong new bridge between the police and the public’. “It will produce a clarity and accountability for police performance,” he added.

Government promises fewer gimmicks and greater discretion

Police minister Nick Herbert has promised an end to ‘government by gimmick’.

He said that the ‘tough rhetoric’ on crime spouted by the previous government had led to ill-thought measures and ineffective authoritarianism which ‘threatened civil liberties and failed to build public confidence’.

“Grandstanding by previous ministers on sentencing was followed by emergency measures such as the End of Custody Licence scheme which saw 80,000 prisoners released early, until the scheme was scrapped weeks before the General Election.”

Mr Herbert also said centralisation had had only a limited success in driving up standards in the criminal justice system.

“Police forces, prison and probation services became almost overwhelmed with targets imposed from Whitehall and process measures that have sapped their morale and caused widespread resentment.

“It also drove a fractured system – each agency looking to central government for direction rather than looking to the victims, witnesses, offenders and wider public and then working across the system to solve their problems.”

Mr Herbert promised that his government would give the criminal justice system greater independence.

“We must stop telling criminal justice professionals how to do their job, and start holding them firmly to account for the results they deliver. The huge gain will be a reduction in bureaucracy, greater discretion and more local innovation.

“We must trust professionals, but that cannot mean giving up on the drive for higher standards. Stronger accountability is the quid pro quo for abandoning the decade of ‘deliverology’.”

Police minister Nick Herbert believes the ‘old numbers game’ of law and order policy was a fraud on the public

Less bureaucracy, more innovation and greater discretion are among the government’s promises for policing

