

POLICE

Police Magazine Update

21 July 2011

Report shows front line will face cuts

Syreeta Lund

Police forces will see police numbers slashed by more than 16,000 officers over the next four years despite assurances from Home Secretary Theresa May that savings would be found elsewhere.

Figures from the HMIC, in a report released today, show forces will be scaled back to levels from 2001 to 2002, cutting back by 16,200 officers, 16,100 police staff and nearly 2,000 PCSOs – a total of 34,100 cuts to the police workforce.

The report, *Adapting to Austerity*, looks at how police forces and police authorities are dealing with 20 percent spending cuts over the next four years as outlined in the government's comprehensive spending review (CSR).

Protecting the front line will be difficult, the report states: "Looking ahead, maintaining the planned level of protection to frontline operational numbers of the workforce over the whole CSR period will be very challenging – especially over the next 18 months, as two-thirds of the cuts to central government funding falls within the first two CSR years."

Paul McKeever, chair of the Police Federation, says the front line of policing will almost certainly be affected by the drop in police numbers and will put the public at risk.

He added that the Federation had predicted "sizeable drops in officer numbers" and this will have an impact on delivering a service to the public.

"There is such a state of flux in policing; it is time to take stock for a moment," he added, calling for a Royal Commission.

The Home Secretary had assured officers at the Police Federation's conference in May that the front line could be protected although looking at police 'pay and conditions' would have to be part of that. Yet, proposals on pay have yet to be agreed at the Police Negotiating Board table and cuts to the front line are already underway, according to the HMIC figures.

The report also says some forces will struggle as they may have already started with deeper cuts to their budgets at the beginning of the recent round of government cuts and may already have reduced front line numbers.

Annual crime statistics released earlier this month showed a hike of 14 percent in burglaries and Simon Reed, vice-chair of the Federation warned the government that the reduction in officer numbers will impact on a further rise in levels of crime.

Chief Constable Chris Sims, ACPO lead on reducing bureaucracy, said: "The report shows forces have made a start but face difficult choices in balancing responsiveness to local need with national demands on policing. Differing sizes, workforce mixes and financial starting positions mean each force is in a unique situation. But alongside huge effort to drive out cost we will see a smaller workforce and significant changes to the service we offer."
