



Metin Enver, Managing Editor

Editorial - June 2008

Back to the future

This month will see the publication of the long awaited Green Paper on Policing.

We are assured that, despite misgivings, the Green Paper will set out a vision for future policing.

Well, let's hope it is just that and not another pat on the back for a government floundering in the polls midway between elections.

One of the key aims of the Green Paper will be to cut bureaucracy and free up police officers' time, allowing them to get back on to the streets.

The handheld devices promised by the Prime Minister last year are already rolling out, although ACPO has already flagged up there will be insufficient numbers to satisfy demand.

Perhaps the best way to tackle red tape is for other chief officers to follow the steps taken by the chiefs of Surrey, Leicestershire, West Midlands and Staffordshire, who in the last month have said they will scrap chasing national targets and get back to traditional, commonsense policing.

These chief officers should be congratulated for putting their heads above the parapet. In the past, all too often chief officers have been silent whilst the Police Federation has criticised the erosion of the Office of Constable and the destruction of discretion with which police officers are allowed to exercise their duty.

But can we really blame them?

I leave it for you to decide if the timing was mere coincidence, but at the very point the 'gang of four' were speaking out for policing, leaked reports in several national newspapers suggested that the government may be looking to directly appoint all chief constables in the future.

This would not only blow out of the water the long established tripartite relationship between government, police authorities and the police service, but would also be a significant steps towards central control of operational policing.

So it would seem that whatever freedom to police by commonsense and restoration of discretion the government gives back to frontline officers with one hand, it will seek to take from chief officers with the other.

And that's what they call progress.

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