

## Maintain officers for efficiency

Police Federation chairman Paul McKeever appealed to the government to preserve police numbers and warned that losing that flexibility would be a 'very dangerous path to go down'.

Speaking during his keynote speech to delegates and addressing Home Secretary Theresa May at the Police Federation's annual conference, he asked that the new government maintain officer numbers

"Home Secretary, for the last twenty years we have had nothing but change; we have reached initiative fatigue. We want to be left as professionals to get on with the job that we do. We want to see the preservation in numbers of those who perform the job of police officer in the service, rather than seeing an increase in the numbers of those that produce little, but earn a living by criticising, double-checking and analysing what our members do," he said.

Mr McKeever raised the issue of a police officer's ability to provide flexibility in emergency situations and warned 'we need flexibility and resilience and we are fast losing it. With the Olympic games coming up this is a very dangerous path to go down'.

The Police Federation's research department published a report during conference into the numbers of unsworn police staff, *Building a Police Workforce for the Future – The Need to Scrutinise Changes to the Workforce Mix*, which reveals that numbers of staff have outstripped numbers of police officers.

Speaking about some of the Police Federation's concerns, Mr McKeever highlighted failings in a justice system which allowed dangerous criminals such as police killers and potentially the likes of Peter Sutcliffe, to walk the streets again. He also said that the previous government had introduced 4,700 new offences including 'disturbing a pack of eggs when directed not to by an authorised officer' which often duplicated laws already in place to deal with a variety of offences.

## Power to the people?

Home Secretary Theresa May said she would keep politics out of policing, give officers more flexibility by cutting down centralised targets and tackle bureaucracy.

Mrs May, who had only recently taken up the post in the coalition government, said she was 'not interested in running the police' and would not tie officers down in more red tape and 'central government diktats'.

She added: "I did not go into politics to run a public service - that is the job of professionals like you."

The Home Secretary attacked the previous government saying that they had rewarded officers for 'recording crime not cutting crime'.

As part of a 'new deal' the coalition government would give some power back to police officers to be able to charge for some minor offences, speeding up the process and giving back officers some discretion.

However, the government will also make police forces more 'accountable to the people they serve' through elected commissioners.

"Instead of having to answer to Whitehall, it will be a democratically elected individual with a mandate to set local policing priorities."

Mrs May said this would enable local people to have a say and to 'kick people out if things go wrong'. She added that elected commissioners would not interfere in operational decisions.

The public would also be entitled to know more information about local crimes and how they are being tackled.

She promised that they would honour the third year of the police pay deal and that they will do everything they can to 'protect frontline services'.

She stopped short of saying they would scrap CSOs. Instead she said they are beneficial to communities but that the government needed to ensure 'people are doing the job they are appropriate for.'

Chairman Paul McKeever: appeals to Home Secretary to preserve police numbers



Tough talk: Home Secretary Theresa May

