

## Officers will be the last to go

The new government has promised to try and 'protect' the policing frontline as cuts loom across the public sector, according to police minister Nick Herbert.

The minister was questioned by officers at the Police Federation's Conference with David Grenz from Leicestershire Police asking whether police numbers are likely to be "drastically cut."

During the Q&A session, Mr Herbert said he did not have the full figures but that the office with responsibility for budgets were looking at the state of public finances, adding that Labour had made it difficult for them as the UK budget deficit was the same as that of Greece.

But he reassured delegates: "Our ambition will be to protect the frontline and make certain that is the last call on the savings we make. All of public services will have to find savings...and deliver more for less."

He added that the coalition's main aim would be to go for 'wasteful expenditure' and quangos so chief officers could protect the frontline.

Shami Chakrabarti, director of human rights organisation Liberty, was applauded when she said that one of things the public want to see are serving uniformed police officers on the streets.

She told Mr Herbert to 'trust the people' when it came to making appropriate cuts such as the scrapping of ID cards and culling Whitehall bureaucrats.

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation, also raised concerns over the definition of the frontline and that it should mean police officers who can respond in an emergency, not civilian staff or CSOs.

Derek Barnett, president of the Superintendents' Association, said: "One fundamental duty of government is to protect the nation and the key to protecting the nation are police officers."

## Too much personal data being held

A huge amount of personal data is being kept on people that we 'do not need or use', says police minister Nick Herbert.

Broadcast journalist John Stapleton questioned the minister about the amount of information being kept on individuals and whether 'booking a vegetarian meal' on a flight merited being kept under surveillance.

Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, said that in looking for potential terrorists it is a question of looking for a needle in a haystack and making the haystack bigger by targeting people simply because they order a vegetarian meal is not the way forward. She added: "They hold too much personal data about too many which includes people who are not convicted..I question whether that makes us safer."

Mr Herbert said that the government is addressing the issue of information kept on databases and that of civil liberties.

He told delegates that the amount of data had grown too much without legislation to keep it in check and that there are issues with the DNA database and with ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) and with how long forces are keeping information.

He added: "We want to make sure there are proper governance arrangements."

Derek Barnett: officers are key to protecting the nation



Photography: Anderson Photography

Shami Chakrabarti questions whether holding more data makes us safer



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