

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **Steve Williams, Chairman, Police Federation of England and Wales**

#### **Keynote speech to conference 2014**

Home Secretary;

Colleagues;

The last year has proved to be another challenging year.

A challenging year, not just for policing, but also for the Police Federation.

But a particularly challenging year for the families, friends and colleagues of those police officers from England and Wales that we have lost in the past 12 months.

Since last conference we have lost four of our colleagues, who have died on duty.

They are:

PC Shazahan Wadud from the Metropolitan Police.

PC Andrew Duncan from the Metropolitan Police.

DC Adrian Grew from Kent Police.

And PC Mick Chapman from West Midlands Police.

Mick was Secretary of the Constables' Branch Board at the West Midlands Police Federation.

I ask you to stand as we reflect and pay tribute to our four fallen colleagues.

Conference,

Last year I started my speech by telling you that the previous 12 months had been particularly difficult for the Police Federation.

Well, if I had known then, what I know now, I may have chosen to be a little more cautious with my reflection.

It will have escaped no-ones attention that there has been negative story after negative story published about the Police Federation.

Whether that be the Police Federation of England and Wales, local Police Federations or Federations representing officers in other UK countries.

To the majority of the public, to politicians and to most members - the Police Federation is the Police Federation, is the Police Federation.

Therefore, a damaging story in a national or local newspaper has a ripple effect that impacts on our entire organisation.

It impacts on us all as individuals.

It impacts on our integrity.

It undermines our legitimacy.

And it damages the confidence which those we serve must have in us.

Last year I also spoke about the need for change and outlined the timetable for the independent review of the Police Federation.

I knew this would attract some flak both inside and outside of our organisation.

I had hoped people would see this for what it was – an opportunity for us to improve what we do and how we do it.

For the benefit of our members and the public.

I am pleased that many have seen it as such, but I am also disappointed that others have quickly forgotten that we instigated the review.

It was the Police Federation that decided we should look at how we can improve what we do.

It was the Police Federation that decided the time was right for an independent analysis of how we operate.

Not government.

Not the media.

Us.

Despite stories to the contrary, let me be clear.

You have been positive about the need for change.

You have actively engaged in the independent review.

Whether giving evidence to the review team.

Or discussion about the recommendations at a local and national level.

And while there have been some differences of opinion, no-one has said to me that we should not change.

No-one has said, the Police Federation is fine exactly as it is.

No-one has demanded the status quo remain.  
And why?

Because we all recognise there are opportunities to improve the way we can best represent police officers in a constantly evolving policing landscape.

During the past 12 months, it has been easy to lose sight of the countless good things that Fed reps around the country do for police officers, day in, day out.

Let's not forget, the overwhelming majority of Fed reps are not full time officials.

They have a day job too.

So much of their representative work is completed in their own time, for no financial reward. They volunteer to assist their colleagues.

Day in day out they make interventions working with forces around sickness levels, grievances, misconduct and performance to name a few.

They make a real difference to the provision of an effective police service and save real money, taxpayers' money.

It's easy for the media, politicians and the public to lose sight of the benefit that the Police Federation brings both locally and nationally.

And while the good deeds of our members are occasionally rightly reflected in the local media, a focus on your efforts and the efforts of Fed reps across the country has become difficult in the haze of negativity and media furore.

That is why, I want to take the opportunity today - on behalf of our members and the public we all serve - to thank each and every one of you here today, and those Fed reps not present, for your individual and collective efforts.

To thank you for making a real difference to the lives of many police officers who have needed our assistance.

Help and advice in their hour of need.

Those who have needed financial or legal support.

Those who have needed to stand up to the might of their own police force.

And indeed, those who have just needed someone to listen.

To thank you for making a real difference to the level of service that communities receive locally.

In the face of negative headlines, you have got on with what you do best.

Effectively protecting the welfare of police officers.

Ensuring we have an efficient service for the public.

You have put the interests of our police officer colleagues and the public at the heart of everything you do.

We are the organisation that stands up for the service; yes stands up when others who should be doing so have been content to sit on their hands, doing and saying nothing.

All too often the media focus on the negative, whether it's about the Police Federation, its representatives or the hardworking police officers doing their level best, in challenging circumstances, to provide a first class service to the public.

If you relied on the media to inform your view of policing you could be forgiven for concluding that we're all corrupt and not to be trusted. Yes we have those who shouldn't be police officers and they dishonour and discredit our good name.

However, they are a tiny minority.

A tiny minority that are not up to the high standards we expect of ourselves as police officers, high standards we exhibit often under extreme stress and pressure.

It is wholly wrong when this tiny minority are used to tarnish the good name of the overwhelming majority of police officers.

It's always good to have the opportunity to redress the balance.

I therefore want to take this opportunity to highlight some of our successes that some may have missed in the unnecessary haste and hunger by some externally to criticise us.

In October, we celebrated the success of some of our colleagues who have gone the extra mile; colleagues' representative of police officers up and down the land performing extraordinary acts every single day.

Our colleagues who put the welfare and interests of their communities before their own.

Our colleagues who are far more representative of policing and police officers.

In partnership with Police Mutual, we showcased the very best of British policing by hosting the Police Bravery Awards 2013.

Conference, I want to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate all those officers who were nominated and the winners.

The South East and overall winner, awarded posthumously, was Constable Ian Dibell from Essex.

Shot and fatally injured while intervening in an incident off duty, Ian was a truly remarkable man.

Ian demonstrated that, whether on or off duty, the protection of the public is paramount in all we do.

He demonstrated that being a police officer is a job like no other.

It's a vocation a decent and honourable calling.

Police officers never clock off.

From the North West, PCs Nathan Jackman and Constable Peter Stevens from Merseyside, for tackling a knifeman.

From the North East, off-duty PC Sara Widdrington from North Yorkshire who fearlessly tackled a gunman in a busy supermarket.

The Midlands award went to PCs Stephen Fletcher and Rory Stuart-Knill from West Midlands who underwent a vicious and sustained attack by a gang of masked petrol bombers.

The Eastern regional award winner was PC Martin Bentley from Norfolk who, despite being stabbed, continued to pursue a violent armed offender.

The winner for Wales was PC Alun Morgan from Dyfed Powys who plunged into freezing quarry waters to rescue a drowning boy.

The South West region winner was PC Nicholas French from Gloucestershire, for tackling a man armed with a knife.

The London winners were PCs Stephen Barker, Thomas Harding, Shumal Haque, Alastair Hinchliff and Andrew Robb for tackling a man armed with a knife.

Conference, these regional winners all demonstrated heroism and bravery.

Let's just take a moment to remind ourselves of the Police Bravery Awards 2013.

This is the reality of policing.

Not what the media and our detractors would have you believe.

But, brave men and women running towards danger.

Putting the welfare of those they serve before their own.

Home Secretary, when you're told that health and safety legislation prevents police officers from doing their job, please remember these brave men and women and their selfless acts of courage.

Often the valuable work of the Police Federation is conducted through effective lobbying, through persuasion and influence out of the glare of publicity.

While it's never going to make the 6 o'clock news it is still important work.

During the past year we have influenced the agenda.

We have changed the conversation to deliver better outcomes for our members and the public.

We submitted evidence to the Silk Commission, set up to review constitutional arrangements in Wales.

We made clear that any move to devolve policing must be done with the aim of improving the service for the public.

However, any attempt to move away from national pay negotiation is not acceptable to us.

A system of pay which results in different forces paying their officers different amounts will result in a post-code lottery of law enforcement for communities.

And this cannot be in the interests of the public.

We contributed to the Sentencing Council's guidelines on sexual offences.

We helped to ensure the guidelines took into account aggravating factors and the impact these have on the victims of this horrendous crime.

The HMIC has now released its report on crime recording and highlighted a number of concerns.

Let's not forget who first raised concerns about the target culture, a culture that has been conclusively shown to skew activity to the detriment of service delivery to the public.

Let's not forget who first publicly spoke out on the issue of 'gaming', a fairly innocuous pseudonym for fiddling the figures.

It was the Police Federation.

And on the eve of conference last year, I expressed serious concern about the pressure being brought to bear on frontline officers on the way they are recording crime.

We were the ones who said this was wrong.

We were the ones who said this was misleading to the public.

Better training will go some way to assist, but change also requires a clear commitment from leaders in the police service.

We owe it to the public and we owe it victims to ensure that crime is recorded accurately.

Crime will rise as the accuracy of recording improves.

Chief Constables must hold their nerve when that happens.

Yes Home Secretary, politicians must hold their nerve too.

We have also done a huge amount of work in relation to mental health.

We understand that we have a role to play to protect vulnerable members of society and we have never shirked that responsibility.

People turn to us when they have no-one else they can turn to.

We take seriously our duty of care to those we serve.

And, although not 'fighting crime', the reality is that dealing with those suffering from mental health issues takes up a considerable amount of police time across the country.

That's why we have been instrumental in campaigning for improvements to training.

But there is still more that can be done.

The seriousness of the issue and the impact it has on people's lives deserves more than an e-learning training package so forces can put a tick in the training box.

Together with colleagues in the health and charitable sector, we have also lobbied for changes to mental health legislation.

We have also worked closely with the Police Minister and are grateful for the support he has given.

And the direct benefits for police officers and for the public are clear to see.

It not only frees up officers' time, it ensures that those suffering with mental health issues receive the most appropriate care from appropriate health professionals.

The announcement earlier this year that mental health nurses will be stationed at nearly 50 police stations across the country will also be a huge help.

An idea initially put forward as part of a proposed motion by colleagues from Devon and Cornwall Police Federation in 2012 and accepted by the JCC as policy.

This demonstrates the difference we can make when we all work together.

But we must be clear on this point.

Police cells are for suspects.

Not for people suffering from mental health issues.

Just weeks ago, as part of the Staff Side of the Police Negotiating Board, and against a backdrop of public sector pay restraint, we agreed a 1% pay increase for all ranks.

And, unlike some other public sector workers, those receiving incremental increases will also benefit from this 1% pay rise.

One of the biggest successes the Police Federation had during the past year was in relation to the compulsory severance proposals in the Winsor 2 report.

The proposal, to introduce compulsory severance for police officers with less than full pensionable service, would have fundamentally changed policing in England and Wales forever.

I know police pensions are a contentious issue, but the introduction of this proposal would have resulted in many of our colleagues never having the opportunity to reach full pensionable service.

Our members were clear with us about what they wanted.

We had to do what was needed to ensure this was not implemented.

And that is exactly what we did.

The General Secretary, together with JCC colleagues and Police Federation staff, were instrumental in preparing and promoting the Staff Side evidence against such proposals.

We could see how losing officers with skills, experience and knowledge was detrimental to the service we are able to provide to the public.

We warned it could jeopardise the independence of the Office of Constable.

We would not give in and, following extensive negotiation and consultation, a failure to agree was registered at the Police Negotiating Board.

Last November, the Police Arbitration Tribunal issued its judgment.

They accepted the evidence put forward by Staff Side.

Home Secretary, it would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to thank you for ratifying the Tribunal decision. (in full).

However, it would be equally remiss of me, if I did not seek an assurance from you that you will never introduce compulsory severance for police officers with less than full pensionable service.

There is a common strand that runs through all we do.

While as a staff association we directly represent the interests of police officers; the wider interest of the public is also at the forefront of our activity.

Just look back at recent years.

When we opposed cuts to the police budget, we did it because we feared it would mean a poorer service for the public.

When we negotiate for fair terms and conditions for police officers, we do so because we know the importance of having a motivated and valued police service.

This is absolutely critical at a time when officer numbers continue to fall.

When we lobby against bad laws, it's to ensure that victims of crime get the justice they deserve; to ensure that dangerous criminals are put and kept where they belong – behind bars so that can no longer be a menace to the community.

One of your predecessors, Lord Howard, put it best when he said 'PRISON WORKS'.

Everything we do is to ensure a more efficient and effective criminal justice system.

A system that ensures that those who commit a crime get the sentence they deserve.

A system that puts victims at the heart of everything it does.

A system that victims of crime can have faith in.

Successive Police Federation Chairmen have stood on this stage and talked about the revolving doors of the criminal justice system.

Yet the situation remains the same.

All too often, the criminal justice system fails victims of crime.

It puts the interests of the criminal before the interests of the victim.

Home Secretary, last year you stood on this stage and told us that anyone convicted of killing a police officer in England and Wales would face a compulsory whole life sentence.

We showed our appreciation for this announcement.

We now know that offenders guilty of killing a police officer in the course of their duty will be considered for a whole life term, an increase from the current starting point of 30 years.

Home Secretary, whilst we welcome the increase it simply does not go far enough.

Police officers on patrol are not routinely armed – we are proud of this.

But that means when a criminal takes the life of a police officer they should expect to die in prison.

If you kill a police officer then you pay the price for the rest of your life, just like that police officer's family, friends and colleagues will bear the pain of grief.

If you kill a police officer in the course of their duty then a whole life term must be mandatory.

Home Secretary, we remain deeply concerned that the numbers of police officers around the country continues to fall.

Cutting police officer numbers today will have a detrimental impact on the service the public receive tomorrow.

Yet at the same time, the HMIC and the IPCC grows.

If this trend continues we will have more people watching those policing, than those actually doing it.

There is no magic box of police officers.

We do not want to return to the bad old days of boom and bust recruitment.

It takes time and investment to guarantee a modern and resilient police service.

We understood that policing would have to take its fair share of the budget cuts.

Home Secretary – we have taken more than our fair share of the cuts.

Police officer numbers are dropping back to the levels last seen when I joined the job in 1984.

We all know the world has changed since then. As have the responsibilities that fall to the police.

The police service I joined bears no resemblance to the police service I will be leaving shortly.

The first duty of government is the protection of its citizens.

Home Secretary – we cannot police the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with resource levels we had in the 1980s.

Home Secretary, we all know that policing commands a rather small budget in the overall grand scheme of government spending.

Please do not put savings before the ability to provide a policing service to the public at whatever level they require and rightly deserve.

Home Secretary;

While you were quick to review police officers' terms and conditions, there still appears to be no political appetite for a root and branch review of policing and the criminal justice system.

No review as to whether 43 forces is a structure fit for purpose any longer.

No review of a model of policing which still sees different forces procuring goods and services from different suppliers.

No review of a changing criminal climate.

No review of whether the current structures best serve victims of crime.

And the result.

The opportunity for organised crime.

The opportunity for cyber crime.

Incompatible IT systems across the criminal justice system.

Victims having to relive their trauma each step of the way, from reporting an offence to securing justice.

Many years of calling for a Royal Commission has fallen on deaf ears.

We were told it would take too long.

It would cost too much.

But if it delivered a system that gives the public an improved service.

If it improved the experience for victims of crime.

Then it is surely a price worth paying.

Home Secretary;

Colleagues;

I am proud to be part of the best police service in the world.

And that is in no small part due to the integral role played by the Federation representatives who are here today.

Over the years, the Federation locally and nationally has made a real difference to the lives of police officers across the country.

We have made a real difference to improving the quality of policing the public receive.

I leave the police service and the Police Federation, confident that we will continue to make a real difference.

The independent review is nothing to fear or be suspicious of.

It offers the opportunity to modernise how we do things – not what we do.

Despite the sullied opinions of those who consider the Police Federation a thorn that has been left untreated, we are much more than stories about Plebgate and Number Two accounts.

We are an organisation with nearly 100 years of history.

We are an organisation that demonstrates we can adapt to the needs of our members and the changing demands of the public.

We are an organisation that stands up for what we believe is right.

We know what works and what does not work in policing.

We know what really benefits the public and what is nothing more than a gimmick.

That is why we are not and never will be silent when we believe something is wrong for police officers or the public we serve.

And while the independent review may change our structures and processes, we will remain such an organisation.

While some may wish to dismiss what we have to say, we are the one organisation that represents the frontline of policing.

From the uniformed bobby on the beat, to the detective investigating terrorism, organised crime and everything in between.

Uniquely we represent everyone from the brand new recruit to the officer on the brink of retirement.

One embarking on a life of public service. The other having given their all.

We bring the knowledge, skills and experience to the policing debate.

Home Secretary, I trust that you and your colleagues recognise this.

So, this week not only marks my last week as Chairman of the Police Federation.

But also, my last week as a police officer.

For over 30 years I have been proud to be a police officer.

For the past 17 months, I have been proud to represent you as your Chairman and to serve in the greatest police service in the world.

But now it is time to hand over the baton to someone new.

Someone who will take forward the change needed to ensure the Police Federation is a more modern, open and accountable organisation.

Someone who will ensure the Police Federation of England and Wales represents its members as effectively as possible.

Someone who will take on the great responsibility of Chairmanship and promote what is in the interests of the public we serve.

In turn; future governments must respect and understand that we won't always agree.

They must respect our views and opinions.

They must listen to us.

They must understand that we bring years of operational experience.

We put the practical into their policy.

Conference, it has been an honour to be your Chairman.

I wish you well.

Thank you.

-ENDS-