

# Slashing chief officer pay would help frontline

Cutting senior officers pay would help sustain the frontline of the police service, according to West Yorkshire police chief Norman Bettison.

Mr Bettison, who is the fourth highest earning chief constable in the country, wrote an article in *The Times* saying he advocated pay cuts and many officers on the ground felt he was aiming his words at them.

In the article, published last month, Mr Bettison said that if a plan was introduced to freeze public sector pay 'starting with the highest paid 25 per cent first, followed, in succeeding years, by the second, and then the third quarters of earners. Then, three years from now, we would have smaller differentials in public sector pay and would have made a huge dent in the debt burden'.

But Michael Downes, chairman of the West Yorkshire Police Federation, spoke at the West Yorkshire Police Federation in Leeds last month to say a 'pay freeze on police officers would effectively be a pay cut and is not acceptable'.

However, Mr Bettison said he wanted to put the comments 'into context' saying he believed, against a backdrop of the MPs expenses debacle and plans to publish salaries of those in the public sector on high wages, he felt it was time to advocate a pay freeze. He told delegates: "If we did that there would be a chance of sustaining the frontline."

He added that he did not advocate a pay freeze for people at the frontline – such as police officers and Police Community Support Officers.

Mr Bettison also said that funding would be a 'black hole' until a new government was elected as it would not be clear what budgets would be available.

# Civilianisation could be bad for force's health

Concerns have been raised that increasing use of community support officers could impact on force resilience and push police officers into more conflict situations with the public.

Michael Downes, chairman of the West Yorkshire Police Federation, asked members on a panel speaking at the federation's open meeting if there was a danger they would lose resilience if non-sworn staff numbers rose and there were fewer police officers.

Norman Bettison, chief constable of West Yorkshire Police, replied: "I am not prepared to put resilience at risk at any time."

Surrey Police the highest number of non-sworn staff with numbers in the region of 50 per cent of force strength. Mr Downes also asked if it concerned members on the panel that police officers may only be used in conflict situations.

Mr Bettison said he believed that PCSOs do a different job to a police officer, "police officers arrest people and confront people and put case files together and put them into the courts."

He added that PCSOs in West Yorkshire Police uniform are a 'visible, accessible police presence' and that keeping PCSOs was a 'no brainer'.

The Q&A session aimed questions at the panel which included chief constable, Mark Burns Williamson, chairman of the West Yorkshire Police Authority and Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation.

Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation, said that many officers liked having the 'extra pair of hands to help out' but added that most teams would prefer to have police officers but are not given an option because of ring-fenced funding.

Mr Burns Williamson said that PCSOs made up 30 per cent of neighbourhood teams in the force and it would leave massive hole if they were taken out of the picture.

Michael Downes: pay freeze would mean pay cut



Photography: Police Federation

Debate over police officers and PCSOs



Photography: Police Federation