



Steve Price is chairman of the Hampshire Police Federation

Timely Response

In Hampshire we're gearing up for our annual Federation open meeting which promises to be a busy one! For many, an update on the current status of the pay debate will clearly be at the forefront of people's minds. Some officers young in service are perplexed by it, those that remember last year believe in 'déjà vu' and there are those who want to take more direct action. It is an area where our ACPO team have been sympathetic. They don't like the idea of a possible staged increase any more than we do. Our members know there is little we can do locally at the moment, but it is still important to keep them informed even if it is to say there's no change. I have written to our MPs asking for support and received some positive responses.

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Staff shortages are becoming a real issue in Hampshire. There are just not enough response officers. The set up here is that the Safer Neighbourhood Teams should not routinely be used for emergency response calls. This means that on some occasions we are unable to answer some 999 calls and that is causing real concern. Of course, there are some Safer Neighbourhood Teams who are responsible for large populous areas who can't spare officers, but I am also aware of a sergeant in one area of the county who is responsible for just one officer and two PCSOs. The template we are using appears too inflexible. The interpretation of the safer neighbourhood concept perhaps needs re-examination. We have six Operational Command Units all doing different things. It means our response teams are run ragged and they haven't got the time to deal properly with calls. As a result they are performing very little proactive policing.

Following on from that there is what I would call at the moment a 'slight angst' at suggestions from the force's

senior management team that the shift patterns should be reviewed because they are not meeting demand. At the moment, we work two days, two lates, two nights and four days off which some believe is not fit for purpose as it takes officers away from the job too long. One possible alternative shift pattern is one similar to that worked in PSNI. That would mean finishing on nights, having two days off, before starting the shift pattern again. That is simply not enough time off for the body to recuperate. Our research shows that perhaps part of the problem with our current pattern is mismanagement. Some major pre-planned events seem to cause difficulty resulting in officers' duties being changed at the last minute. Officers and their families just want to know what they are working and have a life balance without being constantly messed about. We have been promised a full consultation process on the subject.

On a more positive note, we will be discussing piloting the new style uniform to be worn under body armour which should be more comfortable and welcomed by our members.

The full ACPO team will be present at the meeting and we look forward to their responses to what are likely to be some tricky questions.