

## Civilians should not be custody sergeants

The majority of sergeants do not think civilians should be allowed to take on custody sergeant roles, a survey carried out at the Police Federation's annual conference has revealed.

Of the 440 delegates polled in the sergeants' central conference, 96 percent voted against civilian staff taking on custody sergeant posts.

On the same day, Kevin Huish, from Thames Valley Police Federation, called for the roll-out of civilian staff custody officers in his force to be stopped. He also questioned who would be responsible if mistakes were made as civilian officers will not have powers of arrest.

Speaking at the main conference session, Mr Huish said: "It's a bad idea. They need to repeal sections 120 and 121 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act."

Paul McKeever, chairman of the sergeants' central committee, added that the Federation was against civilian custody sergeants.

"It takes many years as a police officer to gain the gravitas, authority and broad knowledge that a police sergeant needs to employ in the role of custody officer," he told delegates.

"The role of the custody officer is a vital one in the police service. Sergeants act as the gatekeepers and guardians of the process, bringing objectivity, balance, fairness, perspective and equability to the custody suite. You will lose all that if you replace sergeants with civilians in the custody suites."

Mr McKeever urged ACPO and the government to think again.

He warned: "Once you lose the sergeants' expertise in the custody suite, it will be lost forever."

## Police vehicles could be claiming lives

The lack of national standards and consistency in buying police vehicles is 'woefully inadequate' and needs to be improved to help save lives.

In the last eight years, 1,411 police officers have been killed or seriously injured while driving police vehicles.

Alan Jones, the Federation's expert on roads policing issues, told their annual conference during a session on police-fit vehicles, that finding a solution to the problems of the 'hotch potch' of vehicles in the service could reduce these figures.

He added: "Having over 157 different types of marked police vehicle is, I suggest, part of the problem. As is the current hotch potch process of buying a vehicle, and adding all sorts of retro fit bolt-on kit to it, purchased from goodness knows how many different suppliers."

Mr Jones said that for many police officers, police vehicles were their workstations and nationally the service manage to clock up 700 million miles each year going about their jobs.

Ian Leyland, chairman of Merseyside Police Federation, referred to PC David Shreeve who died after a Honda Pan European ST1300 motorcycle started to weave at more than 80mph.

He said that police vehicles should be thoroughly tested with police equipment on them to reduce risks to officers and claimed that officers are being used as 'human guinea pigs' having standard vehicles that were 'bastardised and not fit for purpose'.

Peter Neyroud, chief executive of the National Policing Improvement Agency, said that vehicles should not just be looked at in isolation and have to be looked at with equipment fitted, such as mobile data solutions.

Kevin Huish: civilian staff custody officers should be stopped



Photography: Andrew Carruth

Alan Jones: call for purpose-built police vehicles



Photography: Andrew Carruth