



View from the sidelines

Clive Chamberlain, chair of Dorset Police Federation

Empty rhetoric

I suspect that the ‘reforms’ as proposed in the report into police pay and conditions by Tom Winsor have always been about saving money rather than ensuring an effective and fair pay system for officers.

Even the BBC’s Home Affairs Editor Mark Easton conceded in one of his blogs that the Home Secretary in implementing Winsor has “rubber-stamped changes which will take tens of millions out of officers’ pay packets”.

Theresa May, in announcing that she is to ratify the decision of the Police Arbitration Tribunal said that she is “seeking to introduce pay and conditions of service which are fair to police officers”.

The truth is that officers are having imposed upon them changes which are unfair and unreasonable. I have no doubt that these proposals will lead to near zero-morale and seriously damage the trust and confidence that our members have in this government.

Paul McKeever was right when he said: “Whilst we accept that the decision of the Police Arbitration Tribunal is binding on both sides of the Police Negotiating Board it does not mean that we are happy with the outcome.”

As my colleagues from the Metropolitan Police Federation have pointed out, when linked to a two-year pay freeze, followed by a further two-year pay cap at one percent – all the while inflation is approaching five percent – the changes to pay and conditions present a significant reduction in police officers’ standard of living.

The imposition of pensions contribution increases on a group of people who not only have no industrial rights on the issues of pensions but also have no right to negotiate is also grossly unfair.

The reality is that officers face a cut in take-home pay of between 20 and 30 percent over the next three years – more than any other group of public sector workers.

The demand for and on the police has never been greater, yet this government is reducing the number of warranted police officers by at least 16,000. This reduction will lead to a greater demand on those left, which will inevitably cause an increase on the demands for officers to work overtime.

As 20 percent cuts bite and we lose more officers the road ahead looks rocky; but don’t worry, we have the support of the Home Secretary. Remember her words at our Conference in May 2010? “I will always back you, I will always support you, I will always fight for you.”

ACPO and the Association of Police Authorities in their submissions to Winsor (read them with caution – they should carry a blood-pressure warning) asked for measures to be implemented that will still compel officers to work overtime – but would however reduce the rate at which they would be compensated. The report also asked for the ability to impose shift patterns without joint branch boards having any veto. The imposition of Winsor now effectively amounts to a licence to bully.

Police regulations have developed down the years to afford protection to officers from incompetent managers who fail to plan and from those who have scant regard for the work-life balance of others. Ironically those now in senior places who presented Tom Winsor with their ‘wish list’ have enjoyed the protection of ‘Regs’ while on their way up – yet their actions have destroyed these rights for others.

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A pay freeze and cap means a major cut in officers’ living standards



Not to worry – the Home Secretary will back you...

