



House of Commons
Welsh Affairs Committee

Proposed Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales

Second Report of Session 2005–06

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
written evidence*

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The Welsh Affairs Committee

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1 Introduction

Welsh Affairs Committee Inquiry: Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales

1. During the previous Parliament, our predecessor Committee conducted an inquiry into the Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales.¹ During that inquiry the issue of restructuring the police service in Wales was only briefly raised, in response to the Government's intention to review the current configuration of police forces across England and Wales, as set out in the White Paper, *Building Communities, Beating Crime: A Better Police Service for the 21st Century*.² Hazel Blears MP, the Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety, assured that Committee that although she was waiting for the HMIC review to be published, she was not interested in "huge structural change for its own sake".³ The Committee concluded that they saw "no case for the amalgamation of the police forces in Wales".⁴

2. We decided to conduct a short follow up inquiry to consider the progress that had been made on this issue. We took evidence from Chief Constable Terence Grange, Dyfed-Powys Police; Chief Constable Michael Tonge, Gwent Police; Chief Constable Barbara Wilding, South Wales Police; Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom, North Wales Police and Deputy Chief Constable Paul Wood, South Wales Police and Project Team Manager; Cllr Ray Thomas, Chair South Wales Police Authority; Cllr Don Evans, Chair Dyfed-Powys Police Authority; Cllr Ian Roberts, Chair North Wales Police Authority; Mr Geraint Price-Thomas, OBE, Chair Gwent Police Authority; Jean Wilding, Treasurer Dyfed-Powys Police Authority and Shelley Bosson, Clerk, Gwent Police Authority; and Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety.

3. In oral evidence on 17 January 2006, Hazel Blears MP reiterated her view that she was not in favour of structural change for its own sake, but that the structural change proposed in the HMIC report:⁵ "has got a very clear purpose indeed, and that is to make sure that we can cope with the new threats and challenges that face us from serious and organised crime, from counter-terrorism and from major incidents; but at the same time...to be able to sustain in the long term the kind of neighbourhood policing...on which there is some very good practice in Wales".⁶ She was convinced that the report made the case for a major restructuring of the constabulary throughout England and Wales.⁷ This report examines that case.

1 Welsh Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2004-05, *Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales*, HC46.

2 www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/wp04_complete.pdf

3 Welsh Affairs Committee, *Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales*, p15.

4 Welsh Affairs Committee, *Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales*, p16

5 Published on the 16th September 2005. Full text available at www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic

6 Q 84

7 Q 84

2 HMIC Review

4. The HMIC review *Closing the Gap- A review of the 'fitness for purpose' of the Current Structure of Policing in England and Wales*, was published on the 16th September 2005.⁸ The report provided a professional assessment of the preparedness of the 43 police forces in England and Wales to deliver effective protective services. Protective services are defined as: counter-terrorism and extremism; serious organised and cross border crime; civil contingencies and emergency planning; critical incident management; major crime (homicide); public order and strategic roads policing.

5. The HMIC report framed its work within the three-tier model of criminality commonly adopted across the police service:

Level 1: Local issues: crime, criminals, anti-social behaviour and a concomitant need for reassurance, that can be managed within a basic command unit (BCU);

Level 2: Cross-border issues: usually arising from organised criminality, major incidents and events affecting more than one basic command unit and potentially across boundaries into neighbouring forces. This can also include issues of wider public disquiet, notwithstanding that the original incident might otherwise be categorised as Level 1. Protective services are included within the Level 2 classification; and

Level 3: Serious and organised crime, terrorism or other extremist activity operating on a national or international level. This can also include major incidents, events and other issues of widespread national concern, often with national media coverage, that can seriously undermine confidence on a wider scale.

6. The HMIC review reported three main conclusions which directly affected Wales. First, that while the four Welsh police forces were performing well, especially in terms of Level 1 crime, questions remained over the capability and capacity of the forces to deliver protective services (Level 2) in Wales. Second, that in order to meet the required standards across the seven protective services measured, a minimum of 4,000 officers or 6,000 officers/staff combined was required. Third, that the 43 forces in England and Wales should be restructured. The report put forward five options for the proposed restructuring: collaboration; lead force for specialist capabilities; lead regional forces; federation of forces and strategic forces.⁹

8 HM Inspector Of Constabulary Denis O'Connor CBE, QPM, available at www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic

9 www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic

7. The review argued that, in creating a structure that was fit for purpose, the overall goal should be the creation of “organisations that are large enough to provide a full suite of sustainable services, yet still small enough to be able to relate to local communities”.¹⁰ It also stated that achieving that objective would require a significant rationalisation of the way that protective services and support processes were organised, in order put them on a “stronger and more efficient footing”.¹¹

8. The review suggested that strategic forces would provide a more efficient, integrated operating platform above basic command unit (BCU) level, and that the organisation of service delivery would be on a scale large enough to respond dynamically, but local enough to understand the diverse context within which it operated. It concluded therefore that the creation of strategic forces with the appropriate accountability mechanisms, both at the strategic and local level, offered the best business solution: “It offers the best potential, within reasonable time-scales, of improving protective services and providing better value for money”.¹²

9. The Government have accepted HMIC report’s conclusions and recommendations.

10 Ev 2

11 Ev 2

12 Ev 23

3 The Restructuring Process

Timetable for Restructuring

10. Following the publication of the HMIC report, the Home Office requested that police forces and police authorities consider their future policing structures, which was to take place in three key phases:

- By the end of October 2005 – to identify a shortlist of the most promising options for change within each region;
- By the end of November 2005 – to narrow initial submissions to one favoured option; and
- By 23 December 2005 – to produce a final report and outline business case for the preferred option for change.¹³

11. That very short timetable was described by the Chair of the Police Authorities of Wales as a “lunatic timescale”,¹⁴ and while he acknowledged that “we do need to get on with it,” he added, “we certainly need more than 95 days to do a fundamental job which is going to take policing forward for the next 40 or 50 years”.¹⁵ He contrasted this process to the previous major reform of policing in the 1960s, and added “we had a Royal Commission in 1959 that reported in 1962 and we had the Police Act of 1964; that is a five-year time-frame”.¹⁶

12. The brevity of the timetable has had significant repercussions for the forces and authorities in preparing their case for a preferred option. Chief Constable Terence Grange stated,

“if you are to examine what are the various options for meeting the protective services requirement in Wales you need[...]to do some in-depth study of what protective services means, how it applies to Wales, what the funding issues are, what the management issues are, what the command issues and political oversight issues are and explore various options of each so that you can construct something that makes sense”.¹⁷

13 Ev 24

14 Q 59

15 Q 66

16 Q 66

17 Q 16

13. Mr Price-Thomas supported those sentiments, and argued that “policing in the future and policing as ever is more than just Level 2 and we want to look at a comprehensive restructuring of policing in the round”.¹⁸ Hazel Blears MP acknowledged this view: “I entirely recognise that the timescale that has been set for consultation, for submission of business cases is tight[...]I entirely acknowledge that it has been a very, very quick process and that created some difficulties in some quarters”.¹⁹

14. The short timetable has had serious implications for the whole process of restructuring the forces in Wales, both in terms of detailed consultation with the police and police authorities, and broader stakeholder and public consultation. Chief Constable Grange said, “I would not describe that as ‘consultation’: that is meeting the timeframes for a submission of documents that we have been asked to submit. In the pure sense of the word [...] have I been consulted – no”.²⁰

15. Chief Constable Brunstrom added that “I do not think the police service has really been fully engaged in consultation itself, quite apart from discussing that with the public”.²¹ When it was suggested to him that a consequence of this lack of consultation had resulted in the police authorities being “bounced into an all-Wales police force”, Mr Geraint Price-Thomas responded that he would “not disagree with (you on) that point”.²²

Consultation with the Chief Constables and the Police Authorities of Wales

16. In response to that request for options to be submitted to the Home Office, the four Welsh police forces and police authorities adopted a unified approach to considering all available options for Wales. A joint project team was established with representation from all four Welsh forces reporting to a programme board, whose membership consisted of the four Chief Constables and the Chairs of their respective police authorities.²³ Hazel Blears MP expressed gratitude to the Chief Constables and police authorities in Wales for their constructive approach to this exercise.²⁴

18 Q 61

19 Q 86

20 Q 14

21 Q 42

22 Q 75

23 Ev 2

24 Q 106

17. The project team followed the set of criteria and parameters for change as set out by the Home Secretary. The parameters were as follows:

- That the probable solution was for ‘strategic forces’ with a minimum of 4000 officers or 6000 officers/staff combined;
- That the proposals should not split existing forces; and
- That the proposals should not cross Government Regional Office Boundaries.

18. Those parameters were provided in order for forces to consider a variety of options within the broad framework set by the Government. Hazel Blears MP told the Committee that “Government could have sat in the Home Office and had a blueprint in the drawer and said, ‘this is the map for new forces’, but we did not do that. We actually said, ‘you come forward to us with the options that you think are going to work’”.²⁵ However, in practice, the rigid criteria set by the Home Office for the restructuring of the constabulary limited the options which could be considered for the reconfiguration of the forces in Wales.²⁶ The Minister conceded this to an extent, “I realise in the Welsh case there was the preferred option around the all-Wales force; but equally within that we want to test, ‘is it actually going to be effective and work?’”²⁷

19. In order to evaluate the efficacy and practicality of any proposed options, the evaluation and assessment of options for change has had to be done against a standard assessment framework, against which each option has been scored. The attributes and weightings of the framework were as follows:

- Capacity 5
- Capability 5
- Performance 4
- Criminality 4
- Geography *3
- Co-terminosity 4
- Identity *3
- Governance 5
- Economic 4
- Risk 4²⁸

25 Q 106

26 Q 79

27 Q 106

28 Ev 24. The asterisks identify those attributes to which the Welsh project team gave additional weighting.

20. That framework allowed for local discretion to be applied to the weightings of any two of the attributes. In their written evidence, the Police Authorities of Wales expressed a view that the national criteria needed to be applied differently in Wales.²⁹ In line with that view, increases were made to the Geography and Identity attributes.³⁰ Notwithstanding that weighting, the police authorities expressed a concern that important Welsh distinctions had not been fully taken into account in constructing either the parameters or the standard assessment framework for the review. Ms Shelley Bosson, Clerk of the Gwent Police Authority, stated, “although there was a little amount of weighting in terms of the scoring, it was not a lot”.³¹ Indeed, Chief Constable Richard Bruntrom argued, “the proposals made by the Home Office do not take sufficient account, in my view, of the transport, geography and the social consequences of the transport infrastructure and geography in Wales”.³²

21. As a result of the assessment process, the three options which scored the highest, along with the option for no change, were considered by the programme board at a meeting on 19 October 2005. The four options were as follows:

- No change: maintaining the status quo as four existing police forces/authorities;
- Two forces: a merger between North Wales and Dyfed-Powys; and a merger between South Wales and Gwent;
- Two forces: a merger between North Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent; with South Wales remaining as a stand-alone force/authority; and
- A single police force/authority for Wales.

Following the initial assessment, a merger between South Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent; with North Wales remaining a stand alone force and authority, did not score sufficiently highly to be further considered.

22. Based on the strict assessment model set by the Home Office, the option for a single police force/authority scored the highest by a considerable margin. Following discussions at the meeting of the programme board, it was agreed to remove the option of two forces with South Wales standing alone as a force/authority. The remaining three options for change were then put forward in a report for consideration by the Home Secretary.

29 Ev 27

30 The additional weighting is indicated by the asterisks on the criteria of attributes on the previous page.

31 Q 79

32 Q 10

23. The deadline for police authorities to submit a full business plan of their preferred option was set for 23 December 2005. The Association of Police Authorities (APA) claimed that not a single authority presented a full business plan by this deadline, although some authorities had presented detailed proposals.³³ Of the 43 police authorities in England and Wales, 13 expressed a preference for mergers, 13 to remain as stand alone forces, while 17 were undecided, or did not reveal their preference. The Welsh submission did not express a preferred option.³⁴

24. The joint submission from the four forces and police authorities in Wales set out several concerns and issues that needed to be addressed before any further progress could be made:

“We feel that there are some issues which are particularly or specifically relevant to Wales...These points revolve around Wales’ unique position in the review; we are a nation rather than a region and have geographical, infrastructure and cultural issues of which any future structure must take account”.³⁵

25. In terms of governance, the Welsh forces and authorities expressed concern that “restricting the size of police authorities to 23 members in a country where there are currently 22 Unitary Authorities, all having representation on their existing police authorities, creates a democratic deficit which cannot be overcome by reference to a greater role for local authorities at BCU level”.³⁶ Secondly, they argued that the genuinely regional structure of Wales demanded a pragmatic and flexible approach to governance.³⁷

26. The forces and authorities adopted the professional view that given the geography and culture of Wales a substantial form of regional command structure would be unavoidable.³⁸ Finally, they noted that there were significant costs associated with providing both neighbourhood and protective services policing to the standard required in Wales, due, in no small part, to the particular make up of the country.

27. We are concerned that the Government has adopted a one size fits all approach to the restructuring of the constabulary across England and Wales, without taking into account the unique political, geographic and cultural characteristics of Wales. Furthermore, a lack of understanding of the concerns voiced by the police forces and authorities in Wales has undermined the claim that a proper consultation was undertaken. We urge the Government to give further consideration to a more flexible approach to the criteria for reform in the remaining stages of its restructuring of the police forces.

33 www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4553902.stm

34 www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4553902.stm

35 Ev 42

36 Ev 42

37 Ev 42

38 See paragraphs 53 to 56.

Public Consultation

28. Concerns were also expressed that the timetable had not allowed adequate consultation with the public. Chief Constable Grange admitted that “we have fallen foul of consulting with our public because, arguably, they would like more time to think about it”.³⁹ Mr Price-Thomas added that there was a “far greater amount of consultation still needed to be done so that we have the views of the Welsh public on what were fundamental changes to the policing service”.⁴⁰

29. Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety, told the Committee that the police authorities had an explicit responsibility to consult with the public. She said:

“In terms of consultation with the community, we made it very clear at the outset in October last year that this was properly the responsibility of the police authorities, and that is as it should be. The police authorities are the people who are in touch with communities; they are accountable to the communities for the performance of their police forces; and I think they also have some statutory duties around consultation and involving local people”.⁴¹

30. However, the police authorities informed us that the Government’s timetable for the process had presented a “barrier” to effective engagement with the public of Wales.⁴² Despite this, the police authorities in Wales managed to host a number of public meetings to discuss options for policing in Wales.⁴³ The Minister acknowledged that “after discussion with the Association of Police Authorities I was very struck by the extent of the task that we were requiring people to do in a relatively short timescale”.⁴⁴ She added however that 23 December 2005 was not the final deadline for public consultation.⁴⁵

31. We congratulate the police forces and police authorities of Wales for the way in which they have responded to the difficult timetable laid down for them by the Government. We particularly congratulate the police authorities in Wales for their efforts to consult with the public during this time.

32. We are unimpressed with the very short timetable set by the Government for the submission of a preferred option and business plan. It has limited the scope of the debate and impeded consultation with the police forces and police authorities. Furthermore this has removed the possibility of full consultation with the public. While we acknowledge the desire of the Government to get the job done, this should not be at the expense of doing it properly.

39 Q 16

40 Q 66

41 Q 104

42 Ev 8

43 Q 73

44 Q 95

45 Q 105

Information

33. The pressures arising from such tight deadlines were further exacerbated by the insufficient information given by Government to the police forces and authorities in order to enable them to present their submissions by 23 December 2005. Bob Jones, Chairman of the Association of Police Authorities (APA) told BBC radio 4's Today programme "we have been given very little time to actually bring those plans together and we are also lacking in information, particularly about the financing and support for those particular plans, which means we don't feel that those plans are adequate and can guarantee improved performance in the near future".⁴⁶

34. The Chairman of the Police Authorities of Wales cited a specific example to us. When they gave evidence to us on 6 December 2005, (the eve of an APA meeting) they had still not received vital information from the Government regarding funding and governance, only two weeks before 23 December deadline. While Hazel Blears MP conceded, "I would not pretend for a moment that we have complete and total answers to all and every question that will be raised, because these are very complex matters,"⁴⁷ the lack of forthcoming information from Government had severe consequences, both for any form of meaningful consultation with the public, and in enabling the forces and authorities to construct a meaningful business case around their preferred option.

35. A further example of this was noted by Jean Wilding, the Treasurer of the Dyfed-Powys Police Authority. She explained that "one of the frustrations we have found as we have consulted on the information that we have at the moment is that...we have not got the information as to what the additional costs, whether they be set-up or ongoing, are likely to be".⁴⁸ Hazel Blears MP, responded to this, and argued that the Government could not provide figures in relation to funding for set-up costs prior to 23 December 2005, as it needed to evaluate the business plans presented in order to cost what those set-up and additional funding costs might be. She argued that "it would have been unrealistic and not appropriate simply to try and deal with all that before we got the business cases in, because that would have been doing it without the knowledge of the detail that has been worked on".⁴⁹ That, however, is exactly the basis on which the forces and authorities were asked to construct their cost and benefit business plans.

36. We regret that the Government did not provide adequate information in a sufficiently timely manner in order to provide the forces and authorities with the necessary information upon which to base full consideration of the options.

46 www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4554492.stm

47 Q 97

48 Q 71

49 Q 97

Conclusion

37. In addition to the questions over timing and information, there was also some criticism of the way that the Government had handled the consultation process. Comments from both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Wales, have given the impression of a done deal or a *fait accompli*, which have been extremely unhelpful.⁵⁰ Hazel Blears MP acknowledged that there were such perceptions but argued that “if the impression was given that we have simply made up our minds then that was not the case. Maybe that is an unfortunate position for us to arrive at”.⁵¹ However, she went on to say “in the Welsh case there was the preferred option around the all-Wales force”.⁵² **We conclude that the appearance of a ‘done deal’ has only added to the existing tensions and frustrations, which hindered genuine analysis of the issues and meaningful consultation with the public. This was not assisted by the announcements by the Secretary of State for Wales that he favoured the all-Wales option without having all the evidence before him.**

50 Ev 8. See also www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/4335812.htm

51 Q 98

52 Q 106

4 An All-Wales Strategic Force?

Protective Services in Wales

38. Both the Chief Constables and the Chairman of the Police Authorities of Wales expressed general agreement with some of the findings of the HMIC report. In particular they acknowledged the operational case for restructuring to improve the delivery of protective and Level 2 police services in Wales. Mr Geraint Price-Thomas, the Chairman of the Police Authorities of Wales told us that “there is no doubt in my mind that there is a need to address this particular issue so far as the four Welsh Forces are concerned”.⁵³

39. Despite the broad agreement that the operational gap in policing Level 2 issues required addressing with some urgency, there was some disagreement on the way in which the report proposed that operational issues be addressed in Wales. Whilst the HMIC review concluded in favour of the creation of strategic forces, the Association of Police Authorities issued a statement on the 7 December declaring that it did not accept that HMIC’s report, *Closing the Gap*, provided “a complete or comprehensive business case for the creation of strategic forces”. To that end the APA stated that it would “urgently explore alternative models, such as a federated approach to establish if these offer a quicker, more cost effective approach to improve protective policing services”.⁵⁴

40. Terence Grange, the Chief Constable of Dyfed-Powys Police, and the Chair of the Association of Chief Police Officers Wales, stated that whichever option was to be pursued, a larger force or forces than those which currently exist in Wales would be required in order to meet “the demands of protective policing”.⁵⁵ He added that “the reality is that the larger you are numerically, the more you are capable and you have the capacity to deal with the extraordinary. That is what Level 2 is about in part...the truth is that size matters. With the best will in the world there is no getting away from that if Level 2 policing is to be done properly”.⁵⁶

41. We acknowledge the existence of a ‘gap’ in the provision of protective services in Wales. We welcome the opportunity to review the provision of protective services in Wales in order to guarantee a police service that offers a high standard of service and good value for money to the people of Wales.

53 Q 57

54 HC Deb, 19 December 2005, col 1607.

55 Q 4

56 Q 5

A Single Force for Wales

42. In a debate in the House of Commons on 19 December 2005, the Home Secretary rejected from the outset the suggestion of a national police force:

“I think that would be a dangerous development given the spirit of the police in this country, who have always relied on the principle of consent and on the operational independence of Chief Constables. Were there to be a national force, as there is in some countries, there would be an entirely unhealthy relationship between the Minister and the operational commander of such a force. I have opposed the concept from the outset”.⁵⁷

43. Hazel Blears MP denied that proposing a national police force for Wales was indicative of any inconsistency in Government policy, as the concerns that she shared with the Home Secretary of the “danger of blurring the political role with the very important operational independence that there is for policing in this country”,⁵⁸ were not relevant in Wales. She argued that, “in terms of the Welsh police force, (again) policing is not a devolved matter so you are not creating a national police force in Wales that is directly dictated to by politicians in that way: but I entirely acknowledge that there are some differences in relation to the Welsh situation because it is covering a whole nation”.⁵⁹

44. The Government is in favour of the creation of a strategic force in Wales, or a Welsh national police force. This was confirmed by the Home Secretary, Mr Charles Clarke, on 6 February 2006, when it was announced that the four Welsh forces would merge to create an all-Wales strategic force. Chief Constable Barbara Wilding of South Wales Police, agreed with the Government’s aim: “I believe there is a compelling case for moving to one force for Wales on the basis of effective and efficient operations... I believe that this whole exercise must be about improving local policing and improving Level 2 capacity and capability. All the evidence we have seen so far suggests that the one force for Wales provides that”.⁶⁰ Chief Constable Terence Grange from Dyfed-Powys Police added, “one [force] would probably be best in all honesty”.⁶¹

45. Chief Constable Mike Tonge from Gwent Police, was more measured in his support. He said, “as for a plan that could work for the regions and provide the safeguards we are looking for in terms of funding and in terms of governance and the way it is structured, then I think our plan could deliver a single force for Wales that would work”.⁶² However, whilst Chief Constable Brunstrom acknowledged that there was a “great deal of logic” to a single police force for Wales, he argued that “there is not enough information available at the moment to see whether suitable arrangements can be made within a one force solution

57 HC Deb, 19 December 2005, col. 1585.

58 Q 88

59 Q 88

60 Q 55

61 Q 55

62 Q 55

to enable genuine local determination of local policing. I can see very good reasons for a single force, but unless there is more information coming out from the Home Office then I cannot see the justification for the change”.⁶³

46. Whilst two of the four Chairs of the police authorities in Wales expressed a cautious welcome for the creation of an all-Wales force, their support was subject to significant caveats. Cllr Don Evans, Chair of Dyfed-Powys Police Authority conceded that a single force might be the way forward “providing we get a lot of assurances in relation to finance and local policing and neighbourhood policing”.⁶⁴

47. We recognise that the creation of an all-Wales strategic force may have the potential to address the ‘gap’ in the provision of protective services in Wales; but information we have received raises serious questions about the capacity of an all-Wales police force to deliver Level 2 services in North Wales. We also share the serious concerns expressed to us that there is insufficient information upon which to base a considered opinion. Without that information it is not possible for us to conclude that an all-Wales strategic force is the best way forward for Wales, and we regret the Home Secretary’s premature announcement of the 6 February 2006, that an all-Wales force be established.

North Wales

48. In considering the merits or otherwise of an all-Wales police force, the police authorities and Chief Constables were at pains to emphasise the unique position of North Wales police. In addition to strong transport links with North West England, Chief Constable Brunstrom of North Wales police force, told us that:

“In ordinary everyday practical terms we have now a very close and growing operational relationship with Cheshire Police, as we need to. Our criminal market in North Wales...is entirely east-west...we have a completely shared surveillance team now commanded by a Cheshire officer but jointly working for the two Forces. I am sure that whatever happens to police restructuring that relationship is going to have to grow and deepen if we are to properly tackle the Level 2 criminality”.⁶⁵

63 Q 55

64 Q 82

65 Q 22

49. Subsequently, the North Wales police authority decided to explore the merits of developing partnership arrangements in order to address the need to provide the protective services identified by the Home Secretary.⁶⁶ However Chief Constable Brunstrom acknowledged that it was very difficult indeed to see how “a deeper collaborative venture could actually meet the requirements made by the Home Office”,⁶⁷ and ruled out a full merger with Cheshire Police as being “inconceivable now across the English/Welsh border”.⁶⁸ He believed that “our funding arrangements are entirely different; the law is increasingly diverging. I think it is inevitable that there will be deeper and better collaboration across the English/Welsh border in North Wales, Mid Wales and South Wales; but I do not think it offers a solution to this problem”.⁶⁹

50. Chief Constable Grange also ruled out a merger between North Wales police force and the Cheshire constabulary, arguing that:

“We have a geographic and cultural construct and the country is called “Wales”. It seems to me that there is no real argument that could be made for creating a police force that was part in England and part in Wales. The funding of that force would be somewhat difficult, because the funding for the Welsh police force in part comes through the Welsh Assembly, part direct from the Home Office and part council tax; and the funding of English forces is somewhat different... I understand the operational argument for North Wales and Cheshire, but actually Cheshire would probably cease to exist and it would be with a much bigger construct. As an outsider on that debate, it seems to me if North Wales were to join with a very large regional force in North-West England it would be very much a junior partner. I understand the operational imperative because it exists and there is no getting away from it, but actually we are a country”.⁷⁰

51. While Chief Constable Brunstrom acknowledged that there would be tension of working across the England and Wales border in the event of the creation of an all-Wales force, this would not “pose any insuperable problems”.⁷¹ He explained that operationally “the management decisions, the financing arrangements and the regimes behind the operations – will diverge; but operationally...the border is invisible to the general public, to the criminals and to us operationally”.⁷² Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety, highlighted the fact that an all-Wales police force would not preclude collaboration between police in North Wales and in Cheshire because if “collaboration is going to have to continue around criminal markets...I think what we probably want to get to is strategic forces plus collaboration”.⁷³

66 Ev 6

67 Q 22

68 Q 22

69 Q 22

70 Q 9

71 Q 24

72 Q 24

73 Q 103

52. We are concerned that the legitimate and genuine issues raised with regard to the specific nature of crime flows, transport structures, the identity and geography of North Wales have not yet been adequately addressed by Government. Furthermore, it has not yet convinced us that an all-Wales police force will either complement or replace the well-developed relationship that has been developed between North Wales and Cheshire police forces. We are further disappointed that there has been no opportunity to explore the possibility of formalising the present informal co-operation between North Wales police force and the police forces in Merseyside and Cheshire. Additional questions also remain about how that existing collaboration may work if the Cheshire force is subsumed into a larger force.

Regional Command Structure

53. The four Chief Constables believed that a regional command structure with direct responsibility for clusters of BCUs would be necessary, in the event of an all-Wales strategic force. That command structure would be overseen by a Chief Officer Strategic Team whose membership would consist of regional Chief Officers. Those regional Chief Officers would be the named accountable person for a territorial area. The four Chief Constables agreed that the number of regional commanders in a force would need to be defined, and that the posts would need to be at Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) rank, and above the rank of an assistant Chief Constable.⁷⁴

54. That regional structure would have an impact on the national level and in particular the national headquarters. It was envisaged that there would need to be more than one base, rather than a HQ in the traditional sense. Specialist back office support functions such as HR, Finance, Corporate / Business Development and ICT would be dispersed around the country as a whole giving strong consideration to locating these in areas of high unemployment and deprivation – providing that the pre-requisite skills base was available in the locality.⁷⁵

55. Hazel Blears MP, acknowledged the benefits of a regional command structure for Wales: “One of the things I do think is important in relation to North Wales...is whether or not we could have some specific command responsibility within the command team of a new force with some geographical responsibility for that area; which again might be another part of the jigsaw which would be able to reassure people that the needs of the community are not going to be neglected”.⁷⁶ She reminded the Committee that current legislation limits a force to one deputy, but that she was “perfectly open” to discuss this.⁷⁷ She concluded that “the shape of the command team will really be a matter for the new force rather than for me to dictate from the centre”.⁷⁸

74 Ev 12

75 Ev 12

76 Q 94

77 Q 114

78 Q 114

56. We welcome the Government's agreement to consider the necessary changes in statute to allow a regional command structure to operate in Wales, and ask the Government to remove the statutory limit of allowing only one Deputy Chief Constable. Such a move will have the potential to alleviate some of the concerns relating to the provision of policing in North Wales in the event of the creation of an all-Wales strategic force.

5 Funding

57. Our predecessor Committee expressed concerns about the way in which the police service was funded in Wales.⁷⁹ The current review has brought many of those concerns into sharp focus. The Police Authorities of Wales noted two key areas that needed to be addressed. First, that each of the Welsh forces was currently below the “floor” in terms of the settlement position. That has necessitated the Home Office having to allocate a special grant to Welsh forces amounting to £13.873 million. Second, that the significant increases in council tax levels over the last three years had been necessary to meet the shortfall, and that those increases were not sustainable.⁸⁰

Set-Up Costs and Savings for the Proposed Options

58. Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety, agreed with the police authorities in Wales that the four Welsh forces had historically delivered in terms of efficiency plans.⁸¹ However, the Police Authorities of Wales, warned that this achievement would not be sustainable without greatly increased degrees of collaboration particularly in terms of back office functions, as the present legislative framework and different IT systems have tended to militate against any collaboration on a large scale.⁸² Chief Constable Mike Tonge argued that “if you look at the bleak financial settlement the police service faces not just for the next two years but longer term, then we have more chance to give the public a policing service it desires by looking at the efficiencies of merging the four forces than we have standing as four forces alone”.⁸³

59. Hazel Blears MP envisaged that considerable savings could be made in merging the four forces. She argued, “you do not need four headquarters necessarily; you do not need four press offices; you do not need four lots of payroll; you do not need four lots of administrative staff”.⁸⁴ However, she also added “we want to hang on to our really, really good staff and give them a sense that in the new organisation they have a really important role to play, so morale and staff motivation is important”.⁸⁵ **We ask the Government to provide further detail and information about how they will manage the inevitable staff cuts following force amalgamation in Wales.**

79 Welsh Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2004-05, *Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales*, HC46, p13 and 14.

80 Ev 32

81 Q 115

82 Ev 32

83 Q 55

84 Q 94

85 Q 100

60. In costing the options for the restructuring of the forces in Wales, Jean Wilding, the Treasurer of Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, calculated that the lower set up costs are assumed that there was not a change in structure but “a gearing up in terms of Level 2, and the highest set-up costs associated with the one force”.⁸⁶ In terms of additional ongoing costs, the most financially effective model was the one for the all-Wales force.⁸⁷ Chief Constable Grange added that, “however you do the mathematics, financially the option that always comes out on top is one police force in Wales, and there is no escaping that”.⁸⁸

61. The exact figures with regard to both the set-up costs and potential savings were unavailable, as Hazel Blears MP confirmed “the analysis is ongoing”.⁸⁹ In terms of set-up costs, she stated that “we have said we think there will be some initial set-up costs, particularly for those people who volunteer to go early, because they will be the pathfinders [...] smoothing the way, hopefully for other people who come along later. In that respect we have said we can provide £50 million this year from Government for capital costs and £75 million next year to be able to help with that process”.⁹⁰ However when asked to assure the Committee that the cost of restructuring of the constabulary in Wales would be met entirely by the UK Government, she replied “I do not think I am in a position to give that undertaking”.⁹¹

62. Furthermore, there were currently no more specific timetable for the realisation of the savings made as a result of the proposed force amalgamation. Jean Wilding suggested that “all the experience of reorganisations is that the savings are normally over-estimated and take a little while to come along”.⁹² While the Minister could not predict exactly what the timescales would be, she stated that she expected savings to be realised somewhere in the middle of the 3 years predicted by some, and the 10 years predicted by others.⁹³

63. We recommend that the set-up cost for any reconfigured police service in Wales be fully met by the UK Government, so that the practical day to day delivery of police services in Wales is not compromised in any way. Furthermore, it is imperative that any savings made as a result of force amalgamation in Wales, stay in Wales. We seek a guarantee from the Government that this will, in fact, be the case.

86 Q 69

87 Q 69

88 Q 20

89 Q 113

90 Q 97

91 Q 117

92 Q 69

93 Q 113

The Funding of Welsh Force(s) Post-Restructuring

64. Serious concerns were expressed by the Police Authorities of Wales with regard to the funding arrangements for the forces in Wales post-restructuring. The current funding formula reflects density and sparsity. Jean Wilding pointed out that:

“If we were to be funded as one national force for Wales we would be by far the most sparsely populated force. We would stand the risk of losing out massively on funding if a new formula was not looked at to address that because all-Wales would be considered to be a sparsely populated force...there would be a real fear that if that was not addressed then there could be a very significant losing out of funding for an all-Wales Force”.⁹⁴

The Minister acknowledged that concern and assured the Committee that, “I think [it is] inevitable, as we go forward with the mergers and we see new forces coming through then we will have to have a re-examination of the formula [...] I do think that we will need, together with the APA and with the chiefs, to look at the formula to make sure that it does reflect people’s genuine needs”.⁹⁵

65. We recommend that a review of the funding formula be part of any reconfiguration of the constabulary in Wales and that the review take into account the operational realities of policing in Wales. Any real terms decrease in the funding as a result of the restructuring would be unacceptable. We further recommend that the Government commits itself to ruling out any real term decrease in the funding settlement in Wales as a result of police force restructuring in Wales.

Re-allocation of Funding Within Wales

66. Further concerns were expressed with regard to the re-allocation of funding within Wales. For example, Jean Wilding relayed to us the sentiments of the people of Dyfed-Powys who were “concerned that if the money does not come in from [there] they are going to lose it from Level 1 and from neighbourhood policing”.⁹⁶ Cllr Ian Roberts, the Chairman of the North Wales Police Authority repeated this concern, he added “(the money) has got to drift from somewhere. I cannot see it drifting from anywhere else other than local BCUs or local areas one way or another”.⁹⁷ Chief Constable Terence Grange doubted “that would occur to quite the level that people fear”.⁹⁸ Hazel Blears MP stated that it would be the responsibility of the new force to look at the whole of their business, and that extra value gained from amalgamating press offices and payroll, “should release resources to reinvest in some of these other important areas”.⁹⁹

94 Q 79

95 Q 121

96 Q 71

97 Q 72

98 Q 27

99 Q 94

67. However, this concern remains salient in Wales, not least given the uncertainty about when those savings may be realised. In their letter to the Home Secretary, the Chief Constables and the Chairs of police authorities in Wales stated that there were “significant costs associated with providing both neighbourhood and protective services policing to the required standard in Wales. The lack of good north-south transport links and the existence of mountain ranges were important influences on financial projections”.¹⁰⁰ It is feasible that even if a Chief Constable of an all-Wales force wanted to allocate funding to neighbourhood policing, if the funding allocated from Government did not take into account the additional costs of providing that service (alongside the additional burden of providing protective services to a high standard) within the Welsh context, in practice it may not be achievable.

68. When asked to reassure us that there would be additional funding for the force or forces in Wales to meet the Government’s new standard for the provision of protective services, while sustaining a high standard of local neighbourhood policing, the Minister responded by referring to the national roll-out of 24,000 new community support officers.¹⁰¹ She promised that “neighbourhood policing is our guarantee,” but spoke of the re-investment of savings made, rather than any additional funding specifically to guarantee the future of neighbourhood policing in Wales.¹⁰² However, she expressed a determination that the restructuring process would enhance, and not detract from neighbourhood policing.¹⁰³

69. It is essential that the ‘neighbourhood guarantee’ given by the Minister be adequately funded to take into account the particular challenges of the provision of neighbourhood policing in Wales. The forces in Wales will not only face the additional financial burden of raising the standard of protective services; they may also have to meet the set-up costs of any restructuring. We seek assurance from the Government that appropriate additional funding be made available during any transition period, so that the high quality of neighbourhood policing in Wales is not compromised.

The Impact on Neighbourhood Policing

70. Hazel Blears MP congratulated the Welsh forces on their particular strength in the area of neighbourhood policing. She acknowledged that there was a lot that Wales could do to “help guide and shape our policy making”.¹⁰⁴ The Minister added, “I genuinely think that moving towards strategic forces will help us to sustain that relationship in the long-term”.¹⁰⁵

100 Ev 42

101 Q 111

102 Q 112

103 Q 111

104 Q 110

105 Q 110

71. The Minister's assurance was supported by some of the Welsh Chief Constables. Chief Constable Barbara Wilding argued that enhancing protective services would have a positive impact on neighbourhood policing. She believed that "you cannot divide local policing and protective services because if you do not have your protective services set at the right level, operating effectively and efficiently, that will impact on local policing; because the criminal markets are in the local communities".¹⁰⁶ Chief Constable Grange agreed. He noted that it would take two to three years to train and equip officers to deliver protective services, and in that timeframe "you can build in protections and assurances that neighbourhood policing, as is practised in urban and rural Wales, will continue and will be enhanced, but you have to think over time".¹⁰⁷

72. Furthermore, the Chief Constables assured the Committee of the unlikelihood that community beat managers from North Wales would be drawn in to policing major events in South Wales. Chief Constable Tonge said, "I think the capacity would build if you had an all-Wales force, and would make sure you had the public order trained staff which would probably protect the community beat managers more than the current situation, where a smaller force would have to draw on whatever resource it has. It probably would be a benefit".¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in policing those events, Barbara Wilding, Chief Constable of the South Wales force informed us, "we ask for specific resources, usually from Avon and Somerset, usually from Thames Valley...and there is no suggestion at all in any of the three options that are put forward that we would stop that".¹⁰⁹

73. Hazel Blears MP, understood the concerns that resources might be taken away from neighbourhood policing and acknowledged that the Home Office had more to do "to provide almost a guarantee to local communities that they will continue to have a quality and standard of service within the new organisations".¹¹⁰

74. The commitment to innovative neighbourhood policing in several areas throughout Wales, and in particular in North Wales, has been exemplary, and has had a positive impact on the community. We welcome the Minister's commitment to work on a 'neighbourhood guarantee' in order that the high standards set be maintained post restructuring. However, we reiterate our concern that neighbourhood policing be adequately funded, especially in the event of the levelling of the council tax precept throughout Wales.

106 Q 37

107 Q 35

108 Q 38

109 Q 38

110 Q 110

6 Governance

A Strategic Police Authority

75. In their response to the Home Office, the Chief Constables and the Chairs of the police authorities in Wales, stated that Wales had distinctive needs, both in terms of structures of accountability and governance, which would not be met by the Government’s proposals for strategic police authorities. They argued that limiting police authorities to 23 members in a country where there are 22 Unitary Authorities would create “a democratic deficit which cannot be overcome by reference to a greater role for local authorities at BCU level”.¹¹¹ In addition they argued that “there is an emerging view that public services need to be organised on a regional (within Wales) as well as national and local basis”.¹¹²

76. The joint submission from the Welsh forces and authorities outlined the case for a regional structure of governance in Wales. First, they argued that as a result of devolved Government, partnership-working with both the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association, was an essential aspect of the delivery of police services in Wales. Without a regional structure of governance, *Closing the Gap* would result in a huge and diverse geographical area. The four Chief Constables and police authority chairs added that a regional structure would provide effective and streamlined day-to-day administration of the strategic police authority’s policies, practices and directions, reflect the regional differences in Wales and effectively link with operational policing structures.

77. Mr Price-Thomas, Chair of the Police Authorities of Wales, declared that a single Welsh force and a single Welsh strategic police authority, would necessitate a regional tier of governance between that strategic force at the all-Wales level and the important links to the local basic command unit at neighbourhood level.¹¹³ Mr Price-Thomas expressed a desire to “develop a true Welsh dimension to the governance aspect of how the strategic police authority can relate to the communities, it can relate to the public and that the public and the communities of Wales can have a democratic input into policing at whatever tier of policing is appropriate”.¹¹⁴ For that reason, the Police Authorities of Wales recommended that the accountability structures in any new organisational arrangement start at the neighbourhood level, and that co-terminosity of those structures with both BCU and community safety partnership levels was “crucial”.¹¹⁵

111 Ev 42

112 Ev 42

113 Q 60

114 Q 59

115 Q 62

78. However Mr Price-Thomas predicted difficulty with the Home Office on this issue, “it was made clear...that there was a concern about additional tiers of bureaucracy coming into the equation”.¹¹⁶ He added that the Home Office were “somewhat sceptical about any suggestion of the reorganisation of police structures in a regional context,” and that it “frowned upon any suggestion of additional levels of bureaucracy”.¹¹⁷

79. Hazel Blears MP acknowledged that in Wales there was a “real desire for all parts of the country to be able to have representation on that police authority. What we have said at the moment is that we will be flexible around this”.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, she stated “at every level we want to make sure that governance is there, and people are able to have a proper input into priorities”.¹¹⁹ The Minister believed that a balance would have to be struck between having effective accountability, while avoiding the expansion of the bureaucracy around it, “I personally am not attracted to having a whole series of regional boards as well as a strategic police authority”.¹²⁰ However, the police forces and authorities disagreed, they argued “this is not about unnecessary bureaucracy”, but that “the lack of a fast transport infrastructure and the spread out nature of our communities demands a pragmatic approach to issues which are genuinely regional”.¹²¹

80. We welcome the Government’s willingness to be flexible about the size of a Welsh strategic authority in order to guarantee representation of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales. We look to the Home Office to recognise the distinct political context in Wales, and demonstrate a flexibility in approach when considering a regional structure of governance for Wales in order to maximise public engagement with, and democratic accountability of, the police service in Wales.

116 Q 60

117 Q 65

118 Q 108

119 Q 97

120 Q 109

121 Ev 42

The Voluntary Amalgamation of Police Authorities

81. The Home Secretary told Parliament that in cases where there was a voluntary merger between police authorities, implementation could start immediately. That would mean April 2007.¹²² There would be a financial incentive of a contribution towards set-up costs for those who ‘go early’.¹²³ Hazel Blears MP acknowledged however “if the process goes on longer than that then so be it”.¹²⁴ In the event where police authorities do not agree to a voluntary merger, it was envisaged that there would be a four month consultation period, and where there continued to be disagreement, the Secretary of State could use his powers to force the merger through. However, Hazel Blears MP stated, “I do not want to be in a position where we have to force people to do things that they are fundamentally opposed to doing”.¹²⁵

82. We recognise that progress has been made as a result of the exchange of letters between the Secretary of State for Wales and the Home Secretary: in particular on the issues raised by the Secretary of State for Wales in relation to funding, allocation of resources within Wales, regional interests, and rurality. Whilst there is a new deadline of 24 February 2006, the situation remains fluid, and representations from Wales are continuing to be made and received.

83. However, following his statement on the 6 February 2006, the Home Secretary, Mr Charles Clarke MP, has given the forces and authorities in Wales a deadline of the 24 February 2006 by which to agree a voluntary merger. He added that should they be unable to reach an agreement by this date, he would press ahead with these changes anyway. There was also some suggestion that this amalgamation could go ahead without the North Wales force and authority, who would be given an option of joining at a later date.

84. We regret the Government’s hasty announcement to amalgamate the four forces in Wales. The timing of this announcement was unsatisfactory given that there are many outstanding issues yet to be adequately addressed. Furthermore, we are wholly opposed to the premature forced amalgamation of the Welsh authorities and forces. We maintain that in securing a high quality police service for Wales, the Welsh public would be better served by the urgent pursuit of a genuine and detailed consultation to seek both a public and professional consensus on this issue.

85. Finally, we wish to reiterate our support for the constructive way in which the police forces and authorities in Wales have responded to the challenging and problematic timetable imposed upon them.

122 HC Deb, 19 December 2005, col1593.

123 Q 115

124 Q 100

125 Q 123

Conclusions and Recommendations

Restructuring Process

1. We are concerned that the Government has adopted a one size fits all approach to the restructuring of the constabulary across England and Wales, without taking into account the unique political, geographic and cultural characteristics of Wales. Furthermore, a lack of understanding of the concerns voiced by the police forces and authorities in Wales has undermined the claim that a proper consultation was undertaken. We urge the Government to give further consideration to a more flexible approach to the criteria for reform in the remaining stages of its restructuring of the police forces. (Paragraph 27)

Consultation

2. We congratulate the police forces and police authorities of Wales for the way in which they have responded to the difficult timetable laid down for them by the Government. We particularly congratulate the police authorities in Wales for their efforts to consult with the public during this time. (Paragraph 31)
3. We are unimpressed with the very short timetable set by the Government for the submission of a preferred option and business plan. It has limited the scope of the debate and impeded consultation with the police forces and police authorities. Furthermore this has removed the possibility of full consultation with the public. While we acknowledge the desire of the Government to get the job done, this should not be at the expense of doing it properly. (Paragraph 32)
4. We regret that the Government did not provide adequate information in a sufficiently timely manner in order to provide the forces and authorities with the necessary information upon which to base full consideration of the options. (Paragraph 36)
5. We conclude that the appearance of a 'done deal' has only added to the existing tensions and frustrations, which hindered genuine analysis of the issues and meaningful consultation with the public. This was not assisted by the announcements by the Secretary of State for Wales that he favoured the all-Wales option without having all the evidence before him. (Paragraph 37)

Protective Services

6. We acknowledge the existence of a 'gap' in the provision of protective services in Wales. We welcome the opportunity to review the provision of protective services in Wales in order to guarantee a police service that offers a high standard of service and good value for money to the people of Wales. (Paragraph 41)

All-Wales Police Force

7. We recognise that the creation of an all-Wales strategic force may have the potential to address the ‘gap’ in the provision of protective services in Wales; but information we have received raises serious questions about the capacity of an all-Wales police force to deliver Level 2 services in North Wales. We also share the serious concerns expressed to us that there is insufficient information upon which to base a considered opinion. Without that information it is not possible for us to conclude that an all-Wales strategic force is the best way forward for Wales, and we regret the Home Secretary’s premature announcement of the 6 February 2006, that an all-Wales force be established. (Paragraph 47)

North Wales Police Force

8. We are concerned that the legitimate and genuine issues raised with regard to the specific nature of crime flows, transport structures, the identity and geography of North Wales have not yet been adequately addressed by Government. Furthermore, it has not yet convinced us that an all-Wales police force will either complement or replace the well-developed relationship that has been developed between North Wales and Cheshire police forces. We are further disappointed that there has been no opportunity to explore the possibility of formalising the present informal co-operation between North Wales police force and the police forces in Merseyside and Cheshire. Additional questions also remain about how that existing collaboration may work if the Cheshire force is subsumed into a larger force. (Paragraph 52)

Regional Command Structure

9. We welcome the Government’s agreement to consider the necessary changes in statute to allow a regional command structure to operate in Wales, and ask the Government to remove the statutory limit of allowing only one Deputy Chief Constable. Such a move will have the potential to alleviate some of the concerns relating to the provision of policing in North Wales in the event of the creation of an all-Wales strategic force. (Paragraph 56)

Funding Issues

10. We ask the Government to provide further detail and information about how they will manage the inevitable staff cuts following force amalgamation in Wales. (Paragraph 59)
11. We recommend that the set-up cost for any reconfigured police service in Wales be fully met by the UK Government, so that the practical day to day delivery of police services in Wales is not compromised in any way. Furthermore, it is imperative that any savings made as a result of force amalgamation in Wales, stay in Wales. We seek a guarantee from the Government that this will, in fact, be the case. (Paragraph 63)
12. We recommend that a review of the funding formula be part of any reconfiguration of the constabulary in Wales and that the review take into account the operational realities of policing in Wales. Any real terms decrease in the funding as a result of the

restructuring would be unacceptable. We further recommend that the Government commits itself to ruling out any real term decrease in the funding settlement in Wales as a result of police force restructuring in Wales. (Paragraph 65)

Neighbourhood Policing

13. It is essential that the ‘neighbourhood guarantee’ given by the Minister be adequately funded to take into account the particular challenges of the provision of neighbourhood policing in Wales. The forces in Wales will not only face the additional financial burden of raising the standard of protective services; they may also have to meet the set-up costs of any restructuring. We seek assurance from the Government that appropriate additional funding be made available during any transition period, so that the high quality of neighbourhood policing in Wales is not compromised. (Paragraph 69)
14. The commitment to innovative neighbourhood policing in several areas throughout Wales, and in particular in North Wales, has been exemplary, and has had a positive impact on the community. We welcome the Minister’s commitment to work on a ‘neighbourhood guarantee’ in order that the high standards set be maintained post restructuring. However, we reiterate our concern that neighbourhood policing be adequately funded, especially in the event of the levelling of the council tax precept throughout Wales. (Paragraph 74)

Governance

15. We welcome the Government’s willingness to be flexible about the size of a Welsh strategic authority in order to guarantee representation of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales. We look to the Home Office to recognise the distinct political context in Wales, and demonstrate a flexibility in approach when considering a regional structure of governance for Wales in order to maximise public engagement with, and democratic accountability of, the police service in Wales. (Paragraph 80)
16. We regret the Government’s hasty announcement to amalgamate the four forces in Wales. The timing of this announcement was unsatisfactory given that there are many outstanding issues yet to be adequately addressed. Furthermore, we are wholly opposed to the premature forced amalgamation of the Welsh authorities and forces. We maintain that in securing a high quality police service for Wales, the Welsh public would be better served by the urgent pursuit of a genuine and detailed consultation to seek both a public and professional consensus on this issue. (Paragraph 84)
17. Finally, we wish to reiterate our support for the constructive way in which the police forces and authorities in Wales have responded to the challenging and problematic timetable imposed upon them. (Paragraph 85)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 14 February 2006

Members present:

Dr Hywel Francis, in the Chair

Mr Stephen Crabb

Nia Griffith

Mr David Jones

Mr Martyn Jones

Hywel Williams

Mark Williams

Draft Report (Proposed Restructuring of the Police Forces in Wales), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 85 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That the provisions of Standing Order No. 134 (Select Committees (reports)) be applied to the Report.

Several Papers were ordered to be appended to the Minutes of Evidence.

Ordered, That the Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee be reported to the House.—(*The Chairman.*)

[Adjourned till Tuesday 28 February at 10.00am.]

List of witnesses

Tuesday 6 December 2005

Chief Constable Terence Grange, Dyfed-Powys Police, **Chief Constable Michael Tonge**, Gwent Police, **Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom** North Wales Police, **Chief Constable Barbara Wilding**, South Wales Police, **Deputy Chief Constable Paul Wood**, South Wales Police Ev 13

Cllr Ray Thomas, Chair South Wales Police Authority, **Cllr Don Evans**, Chair Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, **Cllr Ian Roberts**, Chair North Wales Police Authority, **Mr Geraint Price-Thomas, OBE**, Chair Gwent Police Authority, **Jean Wilding**, Treasurer, Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, **Shelley Bosson**, Clerk, Gwent Police Ev 36

Tuesday 17 January 2006

Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP, Minister for Policing, Security and Community Safety, Home Office Ev 43

List of written evidence

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| 1 | Wales Police Forces | Ev 1 |
| 2 | Police Authorities of Wales | Ev 22 |
| 3 | Geraint Price-Thomas OBE, Gwent Police Authority on behalf of the four Police Authority Chairs in Wales | Ev 32 |
| 4 | Letter to the Home Secretary from Wales Police Forces and Police Authorities of Wales | Ev 42 |

Reports from the Welsh Affairs Committee since 2005

The following reports have been produced by the Committee in the 2005 Parliament

Session 2005-06

First Report	Government White Paper: Better Governance for Wales	HC 551
First Special Report	Manufacturing and Trade in Wales and The Public Services Ombudsman in Wales Bill [HL]: Government Responses to the Second and Third Reports of Session 2004-05	HC 433
Second Special Report	Police Service, Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour in Wales: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004-05	HC 514
Third Special Report	Government White Paper: Better Governance for Wales: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2005-06	HC 839

Oral evidence

Taken before the Welsh Affairs Committee

on Tuesday 6 December 2005

Members present:

Dr Hywel Francis, in the Chair

Mr David Jones
Mr Martyn Jones
Jessica Morden

Hywel Williams
Mark Williams

Written Evidence from Wales Police Forces

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POLICE SERVICE IN WALES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary undertook a professional assessment of the ability of the current structure of policing in Wales and England to provide effective and sustainable "protective services" (also known as organised and Level 2 services) to a national common standard.

1.2 The report framed its work within the three-tier model of criminality commonly adopted across the police service, where:

- Level 1 Local issues—usually crime, criminals, anti-social behaviour and a concomitant need for reassurance—that can be managed within a Basic Command Unit (BCU).
- Level 2 Cross-border issues; usually arising from organised criminality, major incidents and events affecting more than one BCU and potentially across boundaries into neighbouring forces. This can also include issues of wider public disquiet, notwithstanding that the original incident might otherwise be categorised as Level 1.
- Level 3 Serious and organised crime, terrorism or other extremist activity operating on a national or international level. This can also include major incidents, events and other issues of widespread national concern, often with national media coverage, that can seriously undermine confidence on a wider scale.

1.3 Protective services in this context are made up as follows:

- Counter terrorism and extremism;
- Serious organised and cross border crime;
- Civil contingencies and emergency planning;
- Critical incident management;
- Major crime (homicide);
- Public order;
- Strategic roads policing.

1.4 The findings of the review were produced in the report entitled "Closing the Gap: A review of the fitness for purpose of the current structure of policing in England and Wales".

1.5 The report set out three primary responsibilities for policing below national level:

- The development of local and neighbourhood policing;
- The provision of protective services to national standards;
- The organisation of affordable support and strategic development.

1.6 The review concluded that whilst at a local level the Basic Command Unit arrangements and neighbourhood policing provided a solid platform for the future, the current 30 year old, 43 force structure—with forces of varying sizes and capabilities—did not.

1.7 The review went on to say that for the future there would be a requirement for a more efficient, integrated operating platform above BCU level and that the organisation of service delivery must be on a scale large enough to respond dynamically but local enough to understand the diverse context within which it operated:

“In creating a structure that is fit for purpose the overall goal should be the creation of organisations that are large enough to provide a full suite of sustainable services, yet still small enough to be able to relate to local communities.”

1.8 It also said that to achieve this would require a significant rationalisation of the way that protective services and support processes were organised to put them on a stronger and more efficient footing.

1.9 The Home Secretary accepted the findings of the HMIC report and invited forces to develop options for force restructuring which would best suit future service delivery. This work was to include key stakeholders.

1.10 Further, the Home Secretary set out his view that the HMIC report was unambiguous in its conclusion that the establishment of strategic forces—where forces were re-grouped against a framework of design considerations that include size, patterns of criminality and geography—offered the best long-term business solution. He did not rule out other solutions but indicated clearly that a very compelling case would have to be made out by forces putting forward alternative options for change.

1.11 The forces and police authorities in Wales adopted a unified approach to considering all available options for Wales. A joint project team was established with representation from all forces reporting to a programme board whose membership consists of the four Chief Constables and the Chairs of their respective police authorities. It should be stressed that the project is not looking at BCU structure.

1.12 The Project Team is led by DCC Paul Wood and is based at Brecon Police Station.

1.13 The remainder of this document sets out the methodology and findings of the Project Team to date.

CONTEXT

2.1 The following factors are pertinent to any debate about policing in Wales:

2.1.1 *Political*

- Wales is a country in its own right with its own language, culture and national identity. These are highly distinctive characteristics that distinguish and differentiate the Principality of Wales which must be considered.
- Wales has its own National Assembly and First Minister with devolved responsibility for a number of key services including local government, education and health. These are maturing arrangements and again differentiate the country of Wales.
- Within Wales each force has its own strong local identity within the national context and clearly defined communities that are naturally proud of their heritage and culture. This is particularly relevant in the Northern/Southern aspects of Wales and through the rural and urban parts of the country. These are features that must weigh heavily as part of any review of possible future structures.
- At the operational level Basic Command Units in Wales are coterminous with unitary authority boundaries, offering a solid platform for partnership working and the development of neighbourhood policing that is particularly well embedded in many Welsh communities.
- Welsh Local Government Association’s (WLGA) perspective is that the political lines on the map and governance structures in Wales are not unified across agencies and services. Any agenda for change must give due regard to these broader issues and the opportunities change provides for more cohesive governance across agencies. The Director of the WLGA has been fully engaged in the process and his submission to the National Assembly for Wales Social Justice and Regeneration Committee clearly emphasises the key issues of governance.
- The current proposed reorganisation does not presuppose the devolution of policing to Wales.
- The National Assembly for Wales has set up a Select Committee to examine the issues of Police Force restructuring in Wales.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has published the “Wales Spatial Plan” within which it sets out its vision for how Wales should develop economically, socially and environmentally. The Plan sets out a strategy of linking with partners to fund joint initiatives and projects. This highlights the importance of the partnership arrangements that are developing between agencies across Wales and the key linkages to economic growth, prosperity and investment and the significant impact this will have on Welsh society. The interdependence of such growth and investment and the provision of quality law and order services must not be underestimated.
- There are existing collaborative arrangements between North Wales Police and Cheshire Constabulary in discrete areas of business.

- However, Cheshire Constabulary has currently discounted any option involving North Wales Police and see their future within the North West Region.

2.1.2 *Economic*

- There remains a significant legacy resulting from the decline of the coal industry and heavy manufacturing industries across Wales. Whilst there has been significant inward investment into the commercially attractive and accessible areas of the country there remain many communities that feel disenfranchised.
- The majority of economic activity is centred in Southern Wales, with the three principal cities lying along the M4 corridor. A similar corridor effect is apparent in North Wales along the A55.
- Cardiff is one of the fastest growing capital cities in Europe and is regarded as the political, commercial and business centre of Wales. It continues to attract significant inward investment from within the UK and internationally. This prosperity and development brings with it particular opportunities and challenges for policing within the Southern region of Wales.
- There has been high inward investment but this is skewed towards the southeast corner of Wales. Transport and freight linkages are particularly good in these areas and are attractive to potential investors. 60.1% of the Welsh population live in this area.
- Income levels in many parts of Wales are below national averages. The average gross earnings for full-time employees on adult rates of pay vary from £498.70 per week in Bridgend to £405.10 per week in Powys.
- Large parts of the country have Objective One status in the EC. They are:

Anglesey	Blaenau Gwent	Bridgend
Caerphilly	Carmarthenshire	Ceredigion
Conwy	Denbighshire	Gwynedd
Merthyr Tydfil	Neath Port Talbot	Pembrokeshire
Rhondda Cynon Taff	Swansea	Torfaen
- Precept levels vary significantly across Wales. North Wales Police has the highest precept at £158.95 with South Wales Police having the lowest precept at £120.40. This is a key issue and any option for change will be dependent upon agreed funding mechanisms. Cheshire Constabulary has the third lowest precept in the country. Cheshire Constabulary also has the sixth lowest police cost per resident of the “Shire” forces.
- There is a growing tourist industry across the country. This is energised by Wales as a very diverse country with its own heritage and identity, differing coastal and rural landscapes and unique culture.
- There was a significant impact on the rural economy from the foot and mouth epidemic. In many areas this affected whole communities, families and their dependents, many of whose livelihoods were totally dependent upon the cattle and livestock trade. These communities are taking time to recover.
- There are substantial freight and transport links with Ireland. The key linkages are the ferry ports of:
 - Fishguard and Pembroke Dock to Rosslare;
 - Swansea to Cork;
 - Holyhead to Dublin and Dun Laoghaire.

2.1.3 *Social*

- The landmass of Wales covers 2,074,203 hectares.
- The population of Wales is 2,952,500 with the greatest population densities in the south of the country. The area served by the South Wales Police, for example, covers 10% of landmass and is home to 46% of the people.
- This inevitably gives rise to great variation in population density which in itself has implications for policing.
- There are a large number of long established communities in rural areas and in many the Welsh language is the primary means of communication. Welsh is currently spoken by around a quarter of the population overall and is now a core subject on the GCSE curriculum as part of a longer term aim to establish a truly bilingual nation.

- Uniquely, there is a Welsh Language Act that clearly sets out parameters and requirements and is primarily aimed to give equal legal status to the treatment of the Welsh and English languages. By way of example people in Wales have a statutory right to be dealt with through the medium of Welsh if they so require and this must be incorporated into the every day processes and practices of the Welsh police services.
- Multi-racial communities are predominantly located in south Wales and Cardiff in particular has 8.4% of its population from minority ethnic groups.
- Unemployment levels in Wales average 4.7% and vary across the country from 2.3% in Powys to 7.5% in Blaenau Gwent. There are high levels of deprivation in both urban and rural areas. Sickness levels in some areas are well above UK averages and there are significant levels of long-term unemployment.
- North Wales historically has strong links to Cheshire and Merseyside and these would need to be preserved on an operational level, whatever alterations are made to the structures of the current forces, to reflect patterns of criminality. An enhanced model of cross-border collaboration in North Wales has been examined as a part of this review.
- In the south of the country South Wales Police and Gwent Police have linkages to Bristol and the south west of England for similar reasons.

2.1.4 *Technical*

- Many rural parts of mid and north Wales suffer technical difficulties in relation to mobile communication.
- For all four Welsh forces there are issues of interoperability across IT systems that any change of structure would need to address to maximise the effective deployment of resources and gathering of operational intelligence.

2.1.5 *Environmental*

- The distance from north to south Wales is approximately 155 miles. However, the journey takes some four hours as the arterial road links between the north and south of Wales are relatively poor. The current north-south road infrastructure does not easily lend itself to collaborative working.
- East-west road and rail links are much better in both north and south of the country but there are significant geographical and logistical issues arising in relation to travel and accessibility that place constraints on the rapid deployment of specialist resources and teams across the country.
- Density of population across the country varies significantly.
- Wales has one international airport, near Cardiff. Other primary airports used by people in Wales other than London tend to be Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham. The use of air travel for business within Wales remains in its infancy.
- The primary ports are Holyhead, Fishguard, Milford Haven, Pembroke Dock and Swansea.
- Wales has a coastline of some 1,680 miles including islands.

2.1.6 *Legal and/or Logistical*

- The devolution settlement means that most public services fall under the aegis of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and, notwithstanding that the Police Service in Wales is not devolved, policing strategies and partnership working are developing increasingly on an all-Wales basis.
- As previously stated the Welsh Language Act requires English and Welsh to be afforded equal status.
- There are a number of pan-Wales organisations including Wales ACPO, WLGA as well as varying regional structures. There is a Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) committee.
- The Courts Service is organised on a Wales and Chester basis. There is a small body of Welsh administrative law but the legal system is essentially a Wales and England one.

2.1.7 *Service Performance*

- Recent baseline assessments conducted across the country by HMIC showed the following position in relation to the Welsh forces:

	<i>South Wales</i>	<i>North Wales</i>	<i>Gwent</i>	<i>Dyfed Powys</i>
Reducing Crime	Good Improved	Good Stable	Fair Stable	Excellent Stable
Investigating Crime	Good Stable	Good Improved	Good Deteriorated	Fair Deteriorated
Promoting Safety	Good Improved	Fair Improved	Good Stable	Fair Improved
Providing Assistance	Fair Stable	Good Improved	Good Stable	Fair Stable
Citizen Focus	Fair Improved	Fair Stable	Fair Stable	Good Stable
Resource Use	Fair Improved	Good Improved	Fair Improved	Fair Stable
Local Policing	Fair Stable	Good Stable	Fair Stable	Good Stable

2.1.8 *Other*

- The British Transport Police has a total of 3,002 officers across Scotland, England and Wales and is split into 7 regions. The Wales & West Region extends west from Birmingham and includes Wales and the south west of England. The Region has a total of 281 officers and 79 police staff, though only a small proportion of these are based in Wales. For this reason their numbers have not been considered with any of the options.
- Wales is a nation and a country. It has a national identity and a growing and maturing devolved government. Since the advent of devolution for Wales, it should be recognised that the experience of the police service as it works with partner agencies is that key public service strategies in England and Wales are diverging. This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of devolution but it has significant implications even for those public services which do not form part of the devolution settlement.
- There are maturing collaborative and partnership arrangements in Wales (and with neighbouring forces such as the Cheshire Constabulary) but there remain across the country distinctive regional differences of a cultural, logistical and economic nature which need to be taken into account as part of any model for change.

3 DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

3.1 There are a number of drivers for change in the main arising from the work undertaken by HMIC. These include:

- Improved protective services across the country;
- Opportunities for better intelligence gathering;
- Opportunity for service reconfiguration that will generate economies of scale and improved service resilience;
- Improved implementation of the neighbourhood policing initiative;
- Opportunity for closer alignment with political and partner structures.

4. METHODOLOGY

General

4.1 A programme board was established at the outset comprising the four Chief Constables and Chairs of police authorities in Wales. A project team was assembled with representation from all four Welsh forces to support the Programme Board.

4.2 An early conference and workshops were held during October 2005 to identify possible options for change. These were attended by key internal stakeholders:

- BCU commanders;
- heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety;
- heads of profession from the support services;
- representatives of the staff associations—UNISON, Superintendents Association, Police Federation;
- representatives of clerks to police authorities.

4.3 The Programme Board met thereafter to decide which of the options identified were to go forward for a protective services and organisational assessment.

4.4 In the case of those options surviving this process a protective services assessment (an exercise governed closely by Home Office guidance) was undertaken in a workshop attended by:

- BCU commanders;
- heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety;
- representatives of the staff associations—UNISON, Superintendents Association, Police Federation;
- representatives of clerks to police authorities.

4.5 An organisational assessment which looked at the wider strategic background was then undertaken (again guided by Home Office advice) in a similar way by the key stakeholders referred to above joined by the heads of profession from support services across the four forces and representatives of the Welsh Local Government Association. Other partners were invited but due to tight timescales found themselves unable to attend.

4.6 It should be noted that time constraints had seriously restricted debate and in particular had not allowed for effective consultation with the public—both for forces and police authorities—though some attempts have been made on a localised basis. A meeting in Wrexham, for instance, was attended by over 50 people. The perspective arising from that meeting was not to support any restructuring of forces in Wales but to retain the North Wales Police boundaries and identity.

4.7 The Programme Board intended that a more extensive consultation exercise—a key driver to inform decision-making, would be undertaken both with the public and key partner agencies such as the local authorities after the Home Secretary has considered the merits of the initial business case submitted.

4.8 Staff have been kept informed through staff association involvement in the initial identification of options and the organisational assessment of the protective services options. This will continue in subsequent phases of the exercise. In addition, internal and external press releases have been made at key points in the process to keep staff and the public informed of progress.

4.9 The Initial Business Case was submitted to the Home Office to meet the October deadline. This business case was a joint submission by the police authorities and forces across Wales.

Collaboration with Cheshire Constabulary

4.10 Following the submission of the initial business case to the Home Office a request was received from the North Wales Police Authority to explore further the option of North Wales Police standing alone and arranging the delivery of effective protective services through a formal partnership with Cheshire Constabulary.

4.11 This was documented to the Home Secretary in a letter from the Police Authority Chair, Councillor Ian Roberts dated 28 October 2005.

4.12 As a result the options to be progressed for the November submission were articulated as follows:

- Option 1a. Four forces standing alone with increased collaboration and investment in protective services.
- Option 1b. Four forces standing alone with North Wales Police entering into formal partnership with Cheshire Constabulary.
- Option 2. Two forces South Wales/Gwent & Dyfed Powys/North Wales.
- Option 3. One strategic force for Wales.

4.13 It was resolved that Option 1b should be considered as a possible consequence of the retention of the current force boundaries in Wales, with North Wales continuing to stand alone for the future but closing the gaps in protective services through significant enhancement of partnership working with the Cheshire Constabulary.

4.14 No boundaries were provided by the North Wales Police Authority on the scope or nature of a partnership with the Cheshire Constabulary and so when assessing it all other possibilities short of a full merger of the two forces were considered.

4.15 Engagement with Cheshire Constabulary at this stage was not without practical difficulty given that the Cheshire force had indicated in its own Initial Business Case that it had discounted all options involving North Wales and was as a result fully engaged in work to examine possible future structures for policing the north-west of England. The Cheshire Constabulary representatives agreed, however, that whatever the future held for the structures of both forces collaboration across the border would remain an important component of effective policing for both forces to reflect the operational reality.

4.16 Under all the prevailing circumstances it was not possible to conduct the same comprehensive assessment exercise that had been undertaken during October for the four Welsh forces. However, although the Cheshire Constabulary for understandable reasons declined to participate directly in the assessment of

how far collaboration could realistically be taken, the Force helpfully offered to supply data and did encourage its senior staff to engage positively with counterparts within North Wales Police who had been tasked to research the feasibility of enhanced collaboration in their individual business area and make the professional judgements on what was possible for the future.

4.17 At the conclusion of the assessment staff from the pan-Wales Project Team met with Cheshire Constabulary counterparts to discuss their findings. It was agreed that the assessment prepared by North Wales Police was a realistic and objective projection.

Phase 2—Summary

4.18 The main thrust of the work undertaken during November covered the three following areas:

- developing the North Wales Police/Cheshire Constabulary issues and making a professional assessment on the viability of Option 1b;
- extending public, partner and stakeholder consultation;
- continuing to develop the detail in relation to the operational and financial work already submitted in the October report.

4.19 To progress this, distinct business areas—workstreams—were identified and leads appointed at Chief Officer level from across Wales to direct the work and scope the impact and potential of each of the options in the individual workstreams. Any emerging costs from these assessments are being included in the financial information that will be set out in the final submission;

4.20 A meeting of the Programme Board subsequently took place at Llandrindod Wells on the 22 November 2005 to consider the business case in advance of the four full Police Authorities considering the submission.

4.21 The Programme Board did not recommend a preferred option for the November submission to the Home Office and at the time of writing reports on the November submission are going forward to each of the Police Authorities for consideration before the end of the month.

5. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Internal Stakeholders

5.1 The following internal stakeholders have been engaged in the process:

- Police Authorities of Wales (PAW);
- Chairs and members of police authorities;
- Chief Constables of the four Welsh Forces;
- BCU Commanders;
- Heads of Crime, Operations and Community Safety;
- Heads of support services;
- Staff Associations and Trades Unions.

Staff/Staff Associations

5.2 A concerted effort has been made to keep staff aware of developments without causing any undue concerns. This has been done through a series of internal and external communications and through meaningful engagement with the staff associations. The approach adopted has been very well received by staff and staff associations alike.

5.3 Staff associations themselves were engaged in the initial option identification and organisational assessments. This consultation has been built upon as events have unfolded and all staff associations and trade unions were engaged at a meeting held at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells on the 10 November 2005 specifically to discuss effective internal consultative processes.

5.4 The outcome of this meeting was acknowledgement from the staff associations that they have been fully engaged in the process and the agreement of all present on a number of key principles for their continuing engagement with the process for the future. At the time of writing it is the intention to convene a similar event when the results of the Home Secretary's deliberations are known early in the New Year.

5.5 UNISON and the Police Federation also took the opportunity to contribute to the consultation exercise initiated by the Welsh Assembly Government.

External stakeholders

5.6 External stakeholders engaged include the following:

- National Assembly for Wales—Social Justice and Regeneration Committee;
- Crime Reduction Director for Wales;
- Director of WLGA;
- Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE);
- Wales Office;
- Local Criminal Justice Boards;
- Cheshire Constabulary “Shaping 2morrow” Project Team;
- Local Authorities.

Police Authorities

5.7 The four police authorities have been engaged throughout the process by the Project Team. All have concerns regarding the time-scales of the process and the barrier this has presented to effective engagement with the public of Wales. Additionally, many in North Wales and Dyfed-Powys remain unconvinced of the need for change. All authorities were also concerned over the governance structure for Police Authorities that would exist in the future.

5.8 A report was prepared on behalf of the four police authorities on the way in which they saw that Police Authority governance and accountability could be adapted. It argued that moving to a Strategic Police Authority (be it one or two) would require efficient administration to be undertaken through a tier of Regional Committees.

Public Consultation

5.9 It has been reported previously in this document that time constraints had not allowed for effective consultation with the public—both for forces and police authorities.

5.10 This was of some concern to the Programme Board and during November a number of police authority led public consultation meetings were held across southern Wales. At the time of writing more are planned for the north.

National Assembly for Wales (NAW)

5.11 In response to the Home Secretary’s invitation to the Assembly to submit views on the “Closing the Gap” report, the NAW Social Justice and Regeneration Committee undertook a review of the reports findings, specifically taking views from stakeholders on the different ways in which the aims of the Home Secretary might be achieved in Wales.

5.12 The terms of reference adopted for their review were:

- The relationship between the police and the communities they serve in Wales and matters of local identity;
- The impact upon any change on membership of Community Safety Partnerships and other partnership arrangements;
- The relationship between the police and those services which fall directly within the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government.

5.13 To do this the Assembly embarked on a series of both written and oral consultations, receiving written responses from 30 organisations and taking oral evidence from a further nine bodies.

5.14 Media interest across the Principality has been high and despite best efforts on behalf of the Welsh police forces and police authorities to reassure people that no decisions on the way forward have been taken speculation is rife on what the future policing arrangements will look like across Wales.

5.15 This has been fuelled by some politicians and commentators giving statements on their personal preferences on the way forward.

5.16 Indeed, the interest in this matter is such that the evidence given by the Police Authorities, Chief Constables and the WLGA to the National Assembly of Wales’s Social Justice and Regeneration Committee was televised on the S4C2 Welsh television channel. This was followed up by inclusion in the Welsh current affairs programme “Dragons Eye” and widespread coverage on primetime BBC and ITV Wales news broadcasts.

5.17 In addition, the ICM undertook a poll on behalf of Dragons Eye asking if they thought the public would be better served by the police if:

- The four forces were merged into one 13% (128);
- The four forces were merged into two (say north and south) 10% (100);
- The four forces stay as they are 58% (581);
- Or some other format (like merging with English forces) 7% (67);
- Don't know 12% (124).

5.18 ICM Research interviewed a random sample of 1,000 adults aged 18+ by telephone on 31 October–3 November 2005. Interviews were conducted across Wales and the results have been weighted to the profile of all Welsh adults.

5.19 The Committee will produce its report for debate in plenary during the first week of December 2005.

Local Authorities

5.20 Consultation has been initiated with the Local Authorities across Wales. These have generally involved presentations to Cabinets/Councils followed by a question and answer session.

5.21 A number of common themes have emerged during this consultation so far:

- Concerns regarding timescales allowed for the process;
- Concerns regarding the impact of change on any future Council Tax precept;
- Concerns about the impact of restructuring on local policing;
- Concerns about limited public consultation given the tight timescales;
- The potential cost of any future restructuring; o Concerns over accountability, both internal and external;
- The desire to be provided with some detail on how any restructuring would improve service delivery.

5.22 During the Consultation process the Project Lead, Deputy Chief Constable Paul Wood provided the following assurances:

- BCUs were not included in this reorganisation process;
- A number of options are continuing to be explored;
- There will be no centralisation of policing in a single area of Wales;
- Future governance and accountability structures have not yet been decided;
- Neighbourhood policing will be a key consideration of the restructuring project.

5.23 Every effort has been made to engage both internal and external stakeholders widely but the timescales mandated for this process have inevitably restricted both the extent and quality of the consultation that has been possible.

6. OPTIONS FOR CHANGE—IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

6.1 Despite the success of all four Welsh forces in delivering local policing and the significant investment made through their police authorities, the HMIC report shows that, from now on, policing in Wales will need to encompass the ability to provide Level 2 protective services to a higher standard as well as improved neighbourhood policing. This will require further investment and the current review of structures aims to identify the best way of organising policing above BCU level to achieve this.

6.2 Standing still is not a viable way forward—borne out by the fact that the “no change” option did not pass the protective services assessment for effective Level 2 service delivery.

6.3 As previously stated, key stakeholders assisted in the identification of options for change. These options were then presented to the Programme Board where initially no options were discounted.

6.4 The options considered to merit inclusion in the formal assessment process were:

- No change;
- Cross border amalgamations between English and Welsh Forces;
- Collaborative arrangements amongst the forces in Wales;
- The selection of a “lead regional force”—which in this context would involve the identification and resourcing of one force within the region to host the personnel, finance and logistics of the regional protective services requirements on behalf of the other forces in the region;
- The selection of a “lead force for specialist capabilities”—which would involve one force in the region leading on the investigation of specific categories of crime;

- A federation of forces where, against an agreed regional framework, forces could reform by contracting together to be served by a common set of protective services that could extend to the brigading of support services;
- Strategic Forces. Examples for consideration were:
 - Three forces based on, for example, Fire Service boundaries;
 - Three forces with South Wales Police standing alone and two other forces;
 - Two forces—Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police/South Wales Police and Gwent Police;
 - Two forces—Dyfed Powys Police, North Wales Police and West Glamorgan (currently part of SWP) as one force and Gwent Police, Mid and South Glamorgan (both also currently within South Wales Police) as the other;
 - Two forces—South Wales Police/Dyfed Powys Police, North Wales Police and Gwent Police;
 - One Strategic Force for Wales.

6.5 The Programme Board considered that the following options should be discounted:

- Amalgamations between English and Welsh Forces;
- Collaboration;
- A lead force;
- A lead specialist force;
- A federation of forces.

6.6 Broadly these were discounted at this stage because there was little if any compelling evidence to support taking these options forward to the scoring stage of the process. This was largely because of deficiencies in the arrangements for governance and command. It was felt that the existing collaboration in Wales was not sufficiently effective and that to move to a federation would simply be collaboration by other means—with ambiguous governance. The evidence set out in “Closing the Gap” was felt to apply to Wales as much as in any other area. This evidence posed significant questions regarding the ability of the options listed above to deliver fully effective Level 2 services.

6.7 The Programme Board approved the following seven options for formal scoring at the protective services assessment:

- The “no change” option;
- Three forces based on, for example, Fire Service boundaries;
- Three forces with South Wales standing alone and two other forces;
- Two forces
 - Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police;
 - South Wales Police and Gwent Police;
- Two forces
 - Dyfed Powys Police, North Wales Police and West Glamorgan;
 - Gwent Police, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan;
- Two forces
 - South Wales Police;
 - Gwent Police, Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police;
- One strategic force for the whole of Wales.

6.8 The process for the protective services assessment was set out in Home Office guidance. It involved a panel of senior managers, with professional knowledge in the seven service areas, assessing the viability of the options under consideration to support the delivery of protective services to nationally accepted standards. In relation to each option for change each protective service was scored in turn against a set of standard attributes set out in the guidance. Recent independent assessments of each force undertaken by HMIC were also taken into account.

6.9 The attributes assessed were:

Capacity	Capability
Performance	Criminality
Geography	Coterminosity
Identity	Governance
Economic	Risk

6.10 Only the following options passed the protective services assessment and were considered for the next stage of the process—the organisational assessment:

- No change (failed the protective services test but was required as a baseline);
- Two forces
 - Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police;
 - South Wales Police and Gwent Police;
- Two forces
 - South Wales Police;
 - Gwent Police, Dyfed Powys Police and North Wales Police;
- One strategic force.

6.11 The same process was subsequently applied for the organisational assessment using the weightings for individual attributes that were prescribed in the Home Office guidance notes. These gave, for instance, a heavy weighting to attributes such as capacity and capability but a lower weighting to factors such as geography and identity. Some flexibility was allowed to reflect varying circumstances across the country and as a result the process in Wales gave additional weighting to these last two attributes to take full account of the local situation.

6.12 The four options subject to organisational assessment were presented to the Chairs of police authorities and their Chief Constables on 19 October 2005. After discussion, one option, which involved South Wales Police standing alone, was withdrawn as it was felt that this was not in the best interests of Wales as a whole.

6.13 The Initial Business Case submitted to the Home Office for the October deadline identified the following three options for further examination during November:

- Four forces;
- Two Forces:
 - South Wales Police/Gwent Police;
 - Dyfed Powys Police/North Wales Police;
- One strategic Force for Wales.

6.14 In their October Submission, the four Welsh Police Authorities and Chief Constables did not indicate a preferred option.

6.15 On the 28 October 2005, the North Wales Police Authority met and endorsed the Initial Business Case prepared by the pan-Wales Team. However the Authority also requested that an additional option be included for future consideration, one where North Wales Police continued to stand alone and entered into a formal partnership with Cheshire Constabulary. How this was addressed has been described earlier in this report in Section 4.

6.16 Section 4 of this report records that the main thrust of the work undertaken during November was in the three following areas:

- developing the North Wales Police/Cheshire Constabulary issues and making a professional assessment on the viability of Option 1b;
- extending public, partner and stakeholder consultation;
- continuing to develop the detail in relation to the operational and financial work already submitted in the October report. To progress this distinct business areas—workstreams—were identified and workstream leads appointed at Chief Officer level from across Wales to direct the work and scope the potential impact and potential of each of the options in the individual workstreams. Any emerging costs from these assessments are being included in the financial information that will be set out in the final submission.

6.17 One other very important consideration received attention—the issue of governance.

6.18 The four Chief Constables met on the 6 November 2005 to discuss governance issues, it being recognised that clarity was an essential component of any future operational and organisational command structure. Set out below are some agreed principles arising from that meeting:

- There would be local accountability with local command at the BCU level. Services should be devolved as far as is rational to achieve optimum service delivery. Empowerment and local delivery are tenets of this approach;
- A merged force/merged forces would require a regional command structure with direct responsibility for a cluster of BCUs. The responsibilities of the regional command structure would include performance management and overarching responsibility for delivery at the BCU level. The Regional Chief Officer would be the named accountable person for that territorial area whilst also a key member of the Chief Officer Strategic Team for the force/forces;
- The number of regional commanders in a force would need to be defined and subject to further research and analysis. They would need to be at ACPO rank and should be above the rank of ACC;
- Strategy and policy would be determined and set at the tier that would include the head of the police service, deputy head of service and policy heads. These responsibilities will be at ACC or ACO level;
- Specialist Operational Services would form part of the force level structure and would be managed at the centre and delivered locally in accordance with demand;
- Options for a future structure do not in some cases fit with existing legislation regarding ACPO ranks. This will need further consideration;
- Under the two forces option there would exist the need for a regional structure with the merger of North Wales Police/Dyfed Powys Police. This would not be a requirement of the South Wales Police/Gwent Police option;
- In a one-force model the office of the head of the service and dedicated corporate support team would need to be peripatetic and maximise the use of technology to achieve desired outcomes. There would need to be more than one base, rather than a HQ in the traditional sense. Specialist back office support functions such as HR, Finance, Corporate/Business Development and ICT would be dispersed around the country as a whole giving strong consideration to locating these in areas of high unemployment and deprivation—with the provision that the pre requisite skills base is available in the locality;
- In relation to the estate, at this time it is not envisaged that there would be any new build as part of any option for change;
- There are professional concerns about what the Police Authority structures would look like. These would need to be worked through with the appropriate bodies and debate on these issues is welcomed in the future. The need for appropriate and proportionate local representation is recognised and supported.

6.19 Although significant progress was made during November no additional options for change were identified and at the time of writing it is anticipated that the development and costing work relating to those outlined within the pages of this document will continue through the final month until the submission of the final report on 23 December.

6.20 It is also pertinent that this document has been prepared prior to meetings of the four individual police authorities scheduled to consider the November submission, the results of which will be known before the Chief Constables give oral evidence to the Committee on 6 December.

16 December 2005

Witnesses: **Chief Constable Terence Grange**, Dyfed-Powys Police, **Chief Constable Michael Tonge**, Gwent Police, **Chief Constable Barbara Wilding**, South Wales Police, **Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom**, North Wales Police and **Deputy Chief Constable Paul Wood**, South Wales Police, gave evidence.

Q1 Chairman: Good morning. Could I welcome you all to the Welsh Affairs Committee and, first of all, thank you for your very comprehensive paper that you gave us, it was very helpful. First of all, could I ask you to introduce yourselves for the record, please?

Chief Constable Grange: Terence Grange, Chief Constable of Dyfed-Powys and Chair of the Association of Chief Police Offices in Wales Group.
Chief Constable Tonge: Michael Tonge, Chief Constable, Gwent Police.

Chief Constable Brunstrom: Richard Brunstrom, Chief Constable of North Wales.

Chief Constable Wilding: Barbara Wilding, Chief Constable of South Wales Police.

Deputy Chief Constable Wood: Paul Wood, Deputy Chief Constable of South Wales and the Project Team.

Q2 Chairman: I began, when I welcomed you, by referring to your paper which we found very helpful and interesting, but could I ask a question about the paper: I was struck by the fact that there seems to be a gap when you are describing Wales as a country, which I think no-one would dissent from, but there does not seem to be any reference to the excellent work that you are leading on and that is in the tackling of racism and the whole range of issues surrounding asylum seekers. I wonder whether you could make an observation or respond to that comment of mine?

Chief Constable Grange: In terms of the paper, what we have been asked to do is examine a variety of options for policing Wales in the round. Within that variety of options there are any number of things that we do that we have not mentioned and tackling racism, and the trafficking and exploitation of children and women are but two. They also include child protection and public protection—none of which are mentioned—all of which are actually done pretty well in Wales. We have not actually mentioned every single facet of what we do in the paper, and have concentrated on what the Home Office have asked us to do.

Q3 Chairman: Thank you for that. In your paper you talk a great deal about Level 2 policing issues. How significant are Level 2 issues in the daily operations of the Forces in Wales?

Chief Constable Grange: Level 2 is actually arguably another hidden issue. It is something that we all do to a much greater extent than is realised but it is done quietly, unobtrusively, because that is the way, in many areas of Level 2 work, it needs to be done. You will know that the southern Forces have combined and have put Tarian together, which began as a drugs operation and is now widening out into other forms of criminality. The reality is that South Wales Police contribute a vast number of resources to that, and proportionately Gwent and Dyfed-Powys add to that. Behind that each of us has surveillance teams that deal with Level 2 work within and across our own Forces, and sometimes into other Force areas and into England. We all have major crime

investigations. Some of us do not have major crime inquiry teams. In the case for Dyfed-Powys the need for a murder investigation team fulltime is not made out because we have so few murders. In terms of a larger construct, be it two Forces or one Force in Wales, then there would be an argument for doing that. The reality is that Level 2 work is being done on a daily basis across all the BCUs in Wales, across the four Forces in Wales and into England, and occasionally into the far side of England. It is just a part of what we do.

Q4 Chairman: The paper you gave refers a great deal, quite rightly, to the *Closing the Gap* report and the observations on the current structure of the Police Service in Wales, particularly in relation to the capability and capacity of the Forces to deliver the protective services in Wales. Can you give us some observation about that, please?

Chief Constable Grange: If you examine Denis O'Connor's paper and ask whether a rural Force such as mine would have the capacity on its own to deal with a large plane crash, an incident such as Soham and terrorism, another form of critical incident, the answer is no. The reality is, dependent on the scale of the incident no force in the United Kingdom could deal with an incident on its own. It is the case that Forces across the country are providing assistance for the Metropolitan Police today to deal with what happened in July. The smaller the Force the less likely it is that they could meet, on their own, the demands of protective policing.

Q5 Chairman: What is the optimum size then? 4,000 is a figure that has been used.

Chief Constable Grange: It is an interesting number. I cannot honestly say I know where it came from. There is an equation at which it makes sense to have a given number of officers if you are to meet this demand. It could be 4,000; it could be 5,000. I really would not argue for one number or the other. Insofar as Wales is concerned, and if I took my experience from a previous Police Force Avon and Somerset, the reality is that the larger you are numerically, the more you are capable and you have the capacity to deal with the extraordinary. That is what Level 2 is about in part. If you are to deal, without interfering with the running of BCUs, with the ordinary Level 2 work—the need for long-term surveillance on people for criminal and other activities, counterterrorism work—then the truth is that size matters. With the best will in the world there is no getting away from that if Level 2 policing is to be done properly.

Q6 Chairman: Is there a magic figure? Is this figure of 4,000 the appropriate figure? How low can you go without being ineffective?

Chief Constable Grange: I would say it is a reasonable number. You cannot go down much below it before you would actually be seeking assistance on what would be, for me, a regular basis.

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Q7 Hywel Williams: I assume if you have 4,000 officers it means you are going to have specialists in particular disciplines and, therefore, people could concentrate on those particular issues, which suggests to me why you might need that sort of number. However, is that irrespective of the geographical spread of the Force? You referred yourself to Dyfed-Powys and of course north Wales has some rurality issues. 4,000 spread over a large geographical area might mean that 4,000 is quite the number.

Chief Constable Grange: I suppose there could be an argument that this is more urban-based than rural. For me, if I took a look at Wales in the round, if I were looking at somewhere quiet to conduct drugs creation, drugs sales, I would not try and do it in Cardiff; I would try and do it in the middle of Powys where I might not get noticed, and that is where the work would have to be done. Geography is important, in that it affects the way people think. Demography is important in that it affects the way people think. If you are to do the work across our country, which is Wales, then you would need the Force to do it across Wales. Currently I have the biggest part of Wales but I do not have the resources to do as much Level 2 work as Denis O'Connor argues I should be doing.

Q8 Chairman: I was going to say at the outset that there is no need for all of you to answer every question. The sense is that you are ominously united at the moment!

Chief Constable Grange: If I could put our position, Chairman. As Chair of the ACPO Wales Group it is our tradition that, unless others are asked specific questions, I tend to answer for us. If my colleagues disagree, trust me, they will say so!

Chairman: I am sure they will. That is a good Trade Union principle.

Q9 Mr Martyn Jones: We have read one parameter the Home Secretary has set for the numbers between 4,000 and 6,000. There are also a couple of regional parameters, that the proposals should not split existing Forces and should not cross Regional Offices Boundaries. What are your views on those parameters for restructuring in Wales?

Chief Constable Grange: We have a geographic and cultural construct and the country is called "Wales". It seems to me that there is no real argument that could be made for creating a Police Force that was part in England and part in Wales. The funding of that Force would be somewhat difficult, because the funding for the Welsh Police Force in part comes through the Welsh Assembly, part direct from the Home Office and part council tax; and the funding of English Forces is somewhat different. We have a country—it seems to me we should police our country. I understand the operational argument for north Wales and Cheshire, but actually Cheshire would probably cease to exist and it would be with a much bigger construct. As an outsider on that debate, it seems to me if north Wales were to join with a very large regional Force in north-west

England it would be very much a junior partner. I understand the operational imperative because it exists and there is no getting away from it, but actually we are a country.

Q10 Mr Martyn Jones: As a north Wales Member I am very much aware of the problems of cross-border crime. I do not want to get into that argument at the moment, but I am sure that will come up later. If I could go on to the written evidence the Police Authorities gave to us that said that, "Wales is a nation and not a region, this fact affects the way the national criteria may need to be applied in Wales". Can you think of any way the national criteria could be different in Wales or be applied differently in Wales?

Chief Constable Grange: I would think if you are going to look at the structure of policing in Wales, I am not sure how they plan on structuring such regions as they create in England. There is a desire amongst authorities and the public for regional oversight, political oversight and regional command structures in Wales. That might produce a different structure operationally than will exist in some parts of England. I cannot off the cuff think of others, although my colleagues might.

Chief Constable Brunstrom: I came on a train here today that took less than three hours. I think it was the first time on record that Virgin was seven minutes early! It takes me significantly longer than that to get to Cardiff. The proposals made by the Home Office do not take sufficient account, in my view, of the transport, geography and the social consequences of the transport infrastructure and geography in Wales. Our transport infrastructure is differently developed and less well developed than much of England. I think that is one of the national characteristics that needs taking into account when coming up with a suitable arrangement for policing Wales.

Q11 Mr Martyn Jones: I have to agree with you.

Chief Constable Grange: Obviously there is a very, very wide divergence between rural Wales and the conurbations in the south-east. They may be Welsh but they are different folk who think differently and that would have to be taken into account.

Q12 Mr Martyn Jones: Absolutely. We have some things called "mountains" in between!

Chief Constable Grange: Yes. We did read about the executive helicopter flight between north Wales to south Wales but it would have to do it in England because it could not go over Snowdonia. There is an issue which you have to acknowledge.

Q13 Mark Williams: Turning to the somewhat vexed issue of consultation in these matters, the first point is perhaps more a factual question and then some more controversial stuff. Could you briefly outline the process of consultation that has gone on between yourselves and the Home Office since the publication of the HMIC report, firstly, and the

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mechanisms of that consultation? Secondly, do you all feel that that consultation has been satisfactory from your point of view?

Chief Constable Grange: I would have to break that down into discrete parts. The consultation, if you mean discussions between the public, their Authorities and the Home Office, is vested in the Police Authorities.

Q14 Mark Williams: I mean yourselves?

Chief Constable Grange: So far as we are concerned, I am concerned, Denis O'Connor's paper was published, the Home Office set us the task of examining the various structures that would facilitate doing protective services in Wales and gave us some very tight timescales (and you have to accept that they are very tight), and asked us to respond. The four Chief Constables in Wales decided that we would seek to respond as a group; the four Authorities in Wales decided they would seek to do so, and we would combine; and we have done our level best to meet the timescales that the Government have given us. I would not describe that as "consultation"; that is meeting the timeframes for a submission of documents that we have been asked to submit. In the pure sense of the word, have we been consultation—have I been consulted—no. I am merely doing my professional duty.

Q15 Mark Williams: How tight were the timetables
Chief Constable Grange: The paper was produced towards the end of September. The first response paper was required by 28 October; the second one was required by 28 November; and the final document by 23 December.

Q16 Mr David Jones: I would like to come back to the question of timescales because it is apparent from the papers I have read, particularly from yourselves and the Police Authorities, that you are concerned about the shortness of time you have been allotted to complete this exercise. Could you expand on that particular point?

Chief Constable Grange: If you are to examine what are the various options for meeting the protective services requirement in Wales you need, it seems to me, to do some in-depth study of what protective services means, how it applies to Wales, what the funding issues are, what the management issues are, what the command issues and political oversight issues are and explore various options of each so that you can construct something that makes sense. I suspect that when we submit our final paper we will be challenged, on the financial projections we have made, by the Home Office. You are asked for financial projections on three options, each of which has different variations, and to be accurate in the space of three months. It is asking an awful lot. The word is that the Home Office would like us to get on with putting the papers together, rough and ready as they are—and I have to say I am absolutely confident in the financial projections we have made. We have literally taken the O'Connor paper and said, "If that's what you want, this is what you do".

Even so, to do it the people concerned have been working flat-out for some considerable time. We have fallen foul of consulting with our public because, arguably, they would like more time to think about it. We have not been too sure whether everyone else has been doing it the same way we have—all those issues. Even so the papers have been prepared; the three options we have been asked to look at we have looked at; we have done the mathematics as best we can given the information available and the paper is ready to go to the Home Office.

Q17 Mr David Jones: Have the Home Office explained to you why they are working you to such a tight timescale?

Chief Constable Grange: They did not need to explain it to me. There is a desire to get this done and get it done by 1 April 2007; I understand that. There are things you do not need to be told.

Q18 Mr David Jones: They have not explained?

Chief Constable Grange: No.

Q19 Mark Williams: For the record, could you outline the three remaining options which are on the table for consideration?

Chief Constable Grange: The three remaining options are: Option 1 is the four Forces remain but meet the Level 2 requirement: Option 1A, if you will, is that north Wales and Cheshire, or whatever is in the north-west, has some form of federal arrangement to get the Level 2 work done; Option 2 is two Police Forces in Wales—that would be South Wales and Gwent and North Wales and Dyfed Powys; and Option 3 is one Police Force in Wales.

Q20 Mark Williams: How are you progressing in terms of the position regarding the submission of one favoured option? As a group, are you in agreement on that?

Chief Constable Grange: Currently we are putting a paper in which still meets the requirement that we have been set, which is that three options are going in, each costed. The fact is, however you do the mathematics, financially the option that always comes out on top is one Police Force in Wales, and there is no escaping that.

Q21 Mark Williams: Is there a discussion/dialogue which has to be agreed on that as a group?

Chief Constable Grange: I think if you were to test each of the four Chief Constables about the options analysis as it currently stands and where it would go it would inevitably bring you to one Police Force in Wales with all the caveats and fears that exist, and there are many.

Q22 Hywel Williams: Can I just turn to 1A, first of all, or 1B, the collaboration with Cheshire. I saw in your paper that Cheshire has ruled out in their initial business case a more formal link. You have been giving serious consideration, I suppose, to the

collaboration between North Wales and Cheshire. How far is that in and how far is that out in ordinary everyday practical terms?

Chief Constable Brunstrom: In ordinary everyday practical terms we have now a very close and growing operational relationship with Cheshire Police, as we need to. Our criminal market in north Wales, as you know, is entirely east-west. That has resulted in us sharing senior detectives; it has resulted in mutual aid across the border to help out with serious investigations and murder investigations; we have a completely shared surveillance team now commanded by a Cheshire officer but jointly working for the two Forces; and a whole range of other similar things. I am sure that whatever happens to Police restructuring that relationship is going to have to grow and deepen if we are to properly tackle the Level 2 criminality. That said it looks very difficult indeed to see how a deeper collaborative venture could actually meet the requirements made by the Home Office. The two organisations between them just do not offer the economy of scale savings that would be necessary to generate the benefits that the Home Office and Denis O'Connor's work is looking for. Even if there were a full merger, as Terry was saying a moment ago, I think that is inconceivable now across the English/Welsh border. Our funding arrangements are entirely different; the law is increasingly diverging. I really do not think that that option offers a solution to the problem posed by the Home Office. I think it is inevitable that there will be deeper and better collaboration across the English/Welsh border in north Wales, mid Wales and south Wales; but I do not think it offers a solution to this problem.

Q23 Hywel Williams: If the other options are pursued that would not jeopardise the work?

Chief Constable Brunstrom: No, I do not believe it would jeopardise it at all, and nor do my colleagues in the north-west of England.

Chief Constable Grange: If I could add to that, at a different level in mid Wales, the Powys division (one of my divisions) has created what in traditional terms we would have called a "sub-division", which consists of Knighton, Presteigne and Kington. You will know Kington do England, but the fact is that the new radio system allows those three stations to get their own radio system working amongst each other, and my officers deal with crimes in England if there is nobody available to deal with them from Kington and vice-versa, and that will not cease. Currently, through Tarian we have officers occasionally working in Bristol and that will not cease. None of that will cease; in fact, there is the potential for it to be enhanced because there would be less chief constables' bureaucracies that might get in the way of it.

Q24 Hywel Williams: Are there likely to be any strains within your organisation, particularly in north Wales, given as you note in your paper that "... key public service strategies in England and Wales are diverging...", at least keeping two

balls in the air at the same time working across to Cheshire and also working with agencies in Wales which might be working in slightly different ways?

Chief Constable Brunstrom: I think that degree of strain and tension is inevitable, given the political development of the United Kingdom. The English/Welsh border has more reality now than it has had for several hundred years and that looks set to continue. I do not think that, however, poses any insuperable problems for us. We will have to cope with that. Operationally those sorts of decisions—the management decisions, the financing arrangements and the regimes behind the operations—will diverge; but operationally, as Terry was saying, the border is invisible to the general public, to the criminals and to us operationally.

Q25 Mr Martyn Jones: I think, Chief Constable Grange, you said there were some caveats involved in the third option of an all Wales Force. I wonder if you could describe what they are in detail—potential operational problems and issues involved in an all Wales Police Force.

Chief Constable Grange: The caveats apply to all three options. They are: the timing of this exercise. I understand the argument—if you are going to do something do it quickly—but I fail to see why you should make a mistake quickly. If you think about it and plan it there is no need to make a mistake. There is the issue of funding. We have been specifically asked to study this to meet the requirements of Denis O'Connor's protective services paper, and they are considerable. If there is no funding then that cannot be done to the timeframe given. It would have to be (I think the new jargon is) sequencing; it would have to be done over time, which would present some issues but they are not insurmountable. Then there is the issue of political authority and how the 22 political authorities in Wales would see their interests best served. There are concerns in rural Wales that this might be done by using resources from rural Wales. There have been requests for protection against that happening. Within a proper formula for allocation of resources certain protections can be done; but I have to tell you that if you took an all Wales Police Force and had a formula for allocating Police resources then there would be an issue about Dyfed-Powys, because we have the lowest crime levels, the lowest disorder levels and resources might well be moved to major crime inquiry teams, counterintelligence and demands elsewhere; but actually I do that in my own Force now. I am constantly badgered by parts of my Force to give them more resources and I say, "I have an allocation formula", and give them that allocation formula, "You have received what I can give you. If you want to pay more then I can help you". Those are the caveats. They are not insurmountable given time to think and plan, even without funding.

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Q26 Mr Martyn Jones: Do you not think that potential problems would outweigh the benefits of an all Wales Force?

Chief Constable Grange: That, I think, is a time-driven question. It depends on what your timeframes are. Most restructuring causes problems in the first two or three years and costs in the first two or three years and then the benefits are seen over time. If you clearly analyse what the costs, consequences and benefits are going to be and understand how they will come out over time and are able to discuss it that way then you can have a rational debate; but the reality is that the public do not do rational debate on things.

Q27 Mr Martyn Jones: We are supposed to do the rational debate! I think you put your finger on one of the main problems that I have seen, and that is that there is a possibility of drain from the more rural areas into the urban areas. If it is an all Wales Force there could be a drain from practically everywhere in Wales to south Wales, the highly populated southeast where, as you have said yourself, the figures for crime are much, much worse than your area and the rural areas of north Wales and you have got that pressure. How is that pressure to be coped with?

Chief Constable Grange: I think a Chief Constable and a Police Authority for Wales would have to take a much wider perspective than just dealing with one small area. The reality is there is more crime in urbanised south-east Wales than my area. That does not mean that any sensible Chief Constable Authority would strip the resources from the rural parts of Wales because once our opposition, the criminals, realise that they will start visiting the area. I doubt that that would occur to quite the level that people fear. In any event, given the Government's intention to provide a considerable number of Community Support Officers to Wales, which will have to be based throughout Wales, there is the possibility for mitigating that potential, providing the policing is funded, so that the public will actually have the uniformed patrol and the care they are looking for in those parts of Wales which may lose a few officers. If you take a look at what protective services does, its intent in part is to go after the drug dealers, car thieves, career criminals and serial criminals who actually visit my part of the country from certain parts of England. If that is enhanced then they would do a better job and we are less likely to have visitations from those parts of the country, and I have carefully not named them.

Q28 Chairman: I was very interested in your observations about the caveats, and you seemed to place quite considerable emphasis on what I think were local authorities, given that they, I suppose, are the nearest to the frontline in terms of resources. In your paper you have listed various external stakeholders, and local authorities are there amongst them, but there is also the Wales Office. The Secretary of State has already made very clear his

views on these matters. Have you made representations to him, particularly in relation to the caveats that you have just outlined to us?

Chief Constable Grange: I met with Mr Hain personally last Friday. I believe my colleagues have met him. He is aware, from my perspective, of the caveats. I have briefed him on how I see the funding issues, the command issues regionally and issues about regional political authority. In discussing political authority, I was actually talking about some form of regional political authority, oversight of the Police Service in Wales rather than the county councils because I know there is a push for that from the councils and the Police Authorities.

Q29 Chairman: Did you get a sense from that meeting that he was prepared to take onboard the caveats that you outlined to him?

Chief Constable Grange: I think he understood them. He listened very carefully to what I said. I am not too good at reading politicians, so I do not know how he actually reacted to it!

Q30 Chairman: Did he undertake to convey those to the Home Office?

Chief Constable Grange: He did say to me that he would be taking up with the Home Office the things I discussed with him.

Q31 Mr David Jones: In evidence to the previous Welsh Affairs Select Committee you indicated that the existing informal collaboration amongst Police Forces of Wales, particularly the three southern Forces, had led to savings both in terms of expenditure and efficiency. Would you regard there as being any scope for further savings, both in financial terms and in efficiency terms, by formalising this arrangement through the arrangement of an all Wales Force?

Chief Constable Grange: Noting that the Home Office have said that this is not about cost savings, and noting (I have not read it in depth) that I saw nothing in the Chancellor's statement yesterday that said there would be money for restructuring, I have to say—given what we now know about the staffing levels across Wales, both Police and Police staff, about the spending on IT, vehicles, uniforms, property, any range of things—it seems to me that properly thought-through and over time you could rationalise all of that which you do on a far better arrangement and over time save finance which could be turned to operational policing. I emphasise “over time”; I am talking about over five to 10 years. It is a personal view.

Q32 Mr David Jones: What about improvements in terms of crime-beating initiatives?

Chief Constable Grange: If you do not spend the kind of money that is being spent on IT but still produce good IT across Wales, then that money could be turned to crime work or public disorder work which is another priority, or neighbourhood policing. If you have a more rational approach to your estates; if you spend less on your estates and do

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not venture into private finance initiatives for the next few years (because actually we would not be able to afford it); if you do all the things that support what you do in a more rational way, because there is one way of doing it and not four, then all that money can be turned into better policing in the round, assuming you keep it.

Q33 Mr David Jones: You have told the Committee that you had a meeting with the Secretary of State for Wales on Friday last week. On Wednesday last week he told the House of Commons that there was “no realistic alternative” to an all Wales Force. What prior discussions had you had with the Secretary of State before he made that announcement?

Chief Constable Grange: I have had none personally. I should say that on Friday he told me that in principle he was in favour of an all Wales Police Force. He has never mentioned to me what you have said and I have not discussed it with him.

Q34 Mr David Jones: Have any of your colleagues had a previous discussion with the Secretary of State?

Chief Constable Tonge: I have

Chief Constable Brunstrom: I have.

Chief Constable Wilding: So have I.

Deputy Chief Constable Wood: I have, yes.

Q35 Jessica Morden: You refer to more resources for neighbourhood policing, and a lot of you have put a lot of effort into ward-based policing. The Secretary of State assured the House of Commons that, in the event of an all Wales Force, “regional accountability and neighbourhood policing can be maintained”. In your opinion, is that a possibility?

Chief Constable Grange: Yes, I think it is possible. It depends actually on the provision of the PCSOs and the funding for them rather than restructuring. If you take this exercise and assume there will be little or no funding and do this over time, you would create the protective services over time. There is no capability that exists in Wales to say that we need (and I am speculating on numbers here) 200 detectives to do counterintelligence work, and then take 200 detectives away instantly; because that would denude us of detectives. We would actually have to look at what we need for these services, find the individuals, train them, equip them and then put them in place over time. Even if we had the money, we could not do it overnight. It is going to take two or three years to find, train, equip and place the individuals to do the protective services work. Given that timeframe, then you can build in protections and assurances that neighbourhood policing, as is practised in urban and rural Wales (and that will be different), will continue and will be enhanced, but you have to think over time.

Q36 Jessica Morden: Is there a model that is still on the table and still under consideration which offers a superior structure for the effective delivery of neighbourhood policing throughout Wales?

Chief Constable Grange: No. I think the structure for neighbourhood policing has been worked out by the Home Office and ACPO. It calls for slightly different things in urban and rural areas. It is built around police officers and community support officers in clearly identified communities; and those officers staying with those communities for a considerable period of time. That is the neighbourhood policing model. It involves getting in-depth engagement with communities and pursuing those local desires that they have.

Q37 Jessica Morden: You have referred to this earlier—the HMIC report says “local policing need not be disrupted whilst force level services are rationalised”. If local policing continues to stem out of the existing BCUs and Community Safety Partnerships, would not the streamlining of senior management and backroom staff lead to cost saving, if it was an all Wales Force, and money that could be spent on enhancing local policing?

Chief Constable Grange: Over time that is true: again, over time. If you allow time to take its course then people come, people go and you slowly cut down the number of staff. If you want to do it in a hurry then you are into a completely different regime and that costs money. If we are to do it in the environment we see then this would be done over time. There would be savings over time.

Chief Constable Wilding: I understand the nature of the question regarding local policing, of course I do, because that is absolutely the vital part of policing. You cannot divide local policing and protective services because if you do not have your protective services set at the right level, operating effectively and efficiently, that will impact on local policing; because the criminal markets are in the local communities.

Chief Constable Grange: That is absolutely the case. The Level 1, 2 and 3 paper that came out some years back was seen by some as putting up three levels that were completely discrete—they are not. You can drift from Level 1 to Level 3 in no time at all, and we have to be structured to acknowledge that.

Q38 Mr Martyn Jones: Could I put a hypothetical situation in an all Wales Police Force. You have mentioned PCSOs but you did not mention Community Beat Managers. We have quite a good level of community beat managers in Wales. When we had the scenario of the Caia Park riot situation a lot of CBMs were pulled out of their normal community duties into policing that riot, quite rightly; it had to be done. What if there was a planned event in Cardiff, a royal visit or something along those lines where a lot of police would have to be pulled in to cover that event, would the situation arise where there were CBMs from north Wales pulled into south Wales? Would that not actually, in your opinion, damage the community policing aspect of north Wales?

Chief Constable Grange: If you are talking about an extraordinary event like one that occurred in Scotland, G8, resources went from every English

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and Welsh Force to assist that Scottish Force to police it. That is an extraordinary event. If you are talking about the FA Cup Final in Cardiff, actually I provide two units, 40 officers, to assist the British Transport Police now because they need the assistance; that would, I assume, continue. If you are talking about a royal visit that was of such extraordinary concern that we thought about moving resources into Cardiff for a couple of days to police it then were I the operational officer making the planning for that I would find the most appropriate officers and use them. That might not entail CBMs, because if it was that extraordinary I would probably be looking at people who were public order trained and across Wales you could find them. We do that now; that is no different.

Chief Constable Tonge: I think in my situation this year we had the Foreign Ministers Conference at the Celtic Manor in September, which had over 2,000 staff drawn from 22 Forces. We have arrangements there now. I think the capacity would build if you had an all Wales Force, and would make sure you had the public order trained staff which would probably protect the CBMs more than the current situation, where a smaller Force would have to draw on whatever resource it has. It probably would be a benefit.

Chief Constable Grange: To assist that non-hypothetical event, all my motorcycle officers and half my firearms team would be available, that would be appropriate whether you had one Police Force or however many.

Q39 Mr Martyn Jones: Perhaps I am not making clear the point that worries me. I think you have mentioned that there are several Forces involved—yourselves and south-west Forces and English Forces as well. In an all Wales Force surely there would be funding issues which would tend to try and put Welsh Forces in. Would that not affect Police Forces within Wales more than it does now, because at the moment you pull one in from other English Forces?

Chief Constable Grange: No, I do not accept that is the case. If you were planning an event, because of our structure in Cardiff, and you were looking at considerable resources you would look at the operational needs, the operational training, find those officers and deploy them. You might do an equation of which is the cheaper way to do it—in fact, I would; but that would not overrule the operational demand. I actually cannot envisage a situation in which, for instance, in Cardiff you would consciously start thinking about removing Community Beat Managers from north Wales' stations. There are so many other resources that would be available, it seems to me it would be a very extraordinary event and it would be all hands to the pump before you did that.

Chief Constable Wilding: Could I just come in there for a moment as we seem to be focussing on Cardiff here, and just emphasise the point that Terry has made, which is that steady state. What you are describing is a steady state and we do it every

weekend, during the week, for pop concerts and for all sorts of things. We ask for specific resources, usually from Avon and Somerset, usually from Thames Valley and, what is more, we go and help them; and there is no suggestion at all in any of the three options that are put forward that we would stop that. To think that we would be drawing resources from north Wales, one would have to say, "What is the capacity and capability of north Wales to be able to assist anyway?"

Q40 Mr Martyn Jones: I think that makes a point about the ridiculousness of an all Wales Police Force in terms of geography because you could not possibly bring them in from north Wales really in any kind of situation. Could I just ask one small question relating to that. I think one of the problems that also is highlighted about this issue is, if the neighbourhood policing issue is dealt with in other Police Forces in Wales by PCSOs generally, and we have a different policy in north Wales relating to using CBMs on a ward basis, which is the case at the moment, then surely that actually shows there is a difference between the way that might happen. Change might happen to an all Wales Police Force in that PCSOs might become the norm rather than the CBMs?

Chief Constable Grange: I think the reality is that the Police Authority in North Wales chose to fund extra officers to provide CBMs for every ward. That is a matter for them and over time they pay for it. If you are looking at how we do neighbourhood policing in southern Wales, I think if you look at south Wales you would find that under the Community First Scheme they have police officers in considerable numbers working in wards across south Wales and very, very successfully. I think you will find the same applies in Gwent and Dyfed-Powys. If there is a comparison to be made between how north Wales has got Community Beat Managers and how my colleague for south Wales is doing, I have to tell you that I have looked at south Wales and how they do it; they have police doing neighbourhood policing across south Wales, just like you have in north Wales. The fact is that the Government are giving us PCSOs to support that, not to be that. It may well be done slightly differently right now.

Q41 Mr Martyn Jones: We did have a report from this Committee in the last Parliament and that actually showed a considerable difference between the way community policing was dealt with in different Forces. I am worried that there will be a dumbing down of community policing throughout Wales. Do you have any views on that?

Chief Constable Grange: I would disagree with you. You could have the view that it is done better in one part and more resources are applied to it; but I think north Wales is so different from Dyfed-Powys in terms of size, geography and distances between places that to have exactly the same would, in my view, be a waste of resources. South Wales, as I know, applied a considerable number of staff in their Community First areas and other areas towards the

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neighbourhood policing; and I know they intend to have full neighbourhood policing in operation within the next 12 months. I do not think there will be any dumbing down at all.

Chief Constable Brunstrom: If I could perhaps come in there. I think what you are alluding to, Mr Jones, is one of the things which concerns me with the Home Office's proposals, in that it is on a quite restricted agenda—a very important agenda—and there is no doubt that there is (as is now termed in the vernacular) a “Level 2 gap” and the country will be well served doing something about it. There is a need, in my view, to upgrade our protective services; but there is much more to policing than that. The Government has a very strong agenda on neighbourhood policing, which we have deployed to significant effect in north Wales. You are right to say that there are differences across the country. There are other aspects of policing which are of enormous importance and, in my view, ought to be bound into this wider agenda than simply the protective services, if one is going to propose a restructuring of the Police Service. I would be quite concerned if the Police Service in Wales was restructured just on the protective services agenda without consideration of the other factors. I think there are other pros and cons that would then come into mind. It is self-evident, as Terry was saying a moment ago, that bigger units are more resilient, have more flexibility, more financial clout, but there is a huge tension (particularly in Wales) between geography and identity—linguistic identity, cultural identity and geographical identity—and all of these things come into play. It might be quite right and proper to do community policing slightly differently in Wrexham than in Mold, never mind in Wrexham than in Cardiff; or it might be that a future all Wales Police Service would decide that the best interests of Wales were set by having one consistent model across the country. It would be an interesting debate, and I think my concern is that we are not having it. We are having a very important debate on some aspects of police work while other aspects are getting ignored. What is the importance of local accountability, particularly in a country like Wales? What would the command structure look like? How do local people ensure that their policing service is tailored to their satisfaction? How important is it that they are allowed to? There are some really interesting questions there which as yet, as Terry said earlier, we have really not had the time to ensure are properly addressed.

Q42 Mr David Jones: Chief Constable Brunstrom, I think the phrase you used recently was an “unseemly rush”, presumably on the part of the Home Office. What would you consider would be a reasonable period of consultation which should be adopted for the exercise that is being rushed through at the moment?

Chief Constable Brunstrom: I think the first thing I have got to say is, longer than is currently available. I do not find the current arrangements begin to address consultation needs. As Terry said, much of

the consultation requirement is placed upon Police Authorities rather than Chief Constables, and I would not wish to answer that question on their behalf. I do think we need longer. I do not think the Police Service has really been fully engaged in consultation itself, as Terry was saying, quite apart from discussing that with the public. In my own Force area I feel obliged to point out that the council tax payers are paying more than a third of the cost of the Police Service. I think the only answer I can give you, and I am sorry it is a bit vague and it is a bit like “how long is a piece of string”, is significantly longer than has currently been made available.

Q43 Hywel Williams: Could I come to the devolution of powers for the Police Service in Wales. You say in your submission on page 5, “The current proposed reorganisation does not presuppose the devolution of policing to Wales”. The National Assembly Social Justice and Regeneration Committee said that restructuring should not prejudice any future transfer of responsibilities—two views possibly saying the same thing. Do you agree with the National Assembly that it should not prejudice any change?

Chief Constable Grange: I am aware, as I suspect are you, that the Minister, Hazel Blears, has said that there will be no devolution of Policing to the Welsh Assembly. That is actually a matter for politicians rather than professional Police Officers. What we construct professionally we hope could be managed either with the Home Office or the Welsh Assembly; that would be a matter for political debate. We do not intend to put something together that could not be managed in Wales; that would be self-defeating.

Q44 Hywel Williams: You are not of the view that that this would inevitably lead to eventual transfer?

Chief Constable Grange: Once you create an Assembly you create a certain sense of inevitability about what will transfer there. At some time in the future, and I am thinking five, six or seven years from now, it may be the case that policing and other parts of the criminal justice system may be devolved to Wales; but I think that is a long time away. It certainly will not happen as far as I can see (a personal opinion) in the life of the next Welsh Assembly which runs from 2007 to 2011, I believe.

Q45 Hywel Williams: I do not suppose I could tempt you to give a view as to whether it is a good thing or not?

Chief Constable Grange: No.

Q46 Mark Williams: The National Assembly committee also suggests that the initial set-up costs for any new configuration of Forces should come from additional money from the Home Office. Do you agree with that—again, a political point?

Chief Constable Grange: We put the paper together suggesting what the initial start-up costs and ongoing costs would be if they were to be funded by the Home Office, and I understand the Assembly's view. The reality, as we see it, is that that is not

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mentioned in the Chancellor's paper of yesterday. Therefore, we will inevitably start to plan on the assumption that we will be doing it within current budget, assuming it takes place, and that is what we will set out to do—within current projected budgets.

Q47 Mr David Jones: The Committee also suggested that the Headquarters of a new all Wales Force should be in the north of Wales. How would you respond to that suggestion?

Chief Constable Grange: I suggest there will be an office in north Wales, an office in southern Wales and an office in mid Wales which the future Chief Constable will use as he or she sees fit. I really would not want to get into a debate about precisely where a Headquarters would or should be. There are debates about whether or not you would have the kind of Headquarters we each have now, in any event, in that kind of situation. I rather believe that the Chief Constable will be somewhat peripatetic.

Q48 Mr David Jones: This is what the *Daily Post* described as the “Super copper in a chopper”!

Chief Constable Grange: Yes, an interesting concept. As a former helicopter engineer I would not get in one willingly. I believe that that will be a matter in the end for the Chief Constable designate when appointed and the Authority for a Police Force in Wales, should there be one, when appointed. I think the best thing I can do is leave it to them. It is an interesting suggestion by the Assembly and I will say no more than that.

Q49 Chairman: To end this session could we turn to governance. You refer in your written paper to a meeting that was held on 6 November when the four Chief Constables met and you agreed upon a set of principles in relation to future operational and organisational command structure. Could you identify the key principles there, and tell us whether you have had any feedback from the Home Office about them?

Chief Constable Grange: Could I be terrible and defer that to Paul Wood, who is desperately looking them up right now, because my memory is failing me at this point.

Q50 Chairman: It was only 6 November!

Chief Constable Grange: You have no idea how much we have to deal with!

Deputy Chief Constable Wood: There are a number of principles that are agreed by the Chief Constables one of which you have already addressed, which was the issue of Headquarters and the view taken that in this day and age, with modern technology, it might not be necessary to have what we would normally call a Headquarters. The other principles are: there will be local accountability with local command at basic command unit level emphasising the importance of local policing; a regional command structure that will have direct responsibility for a cluster of basic command units. One of the issues which has come out in researching this is that there are occasions when Chief Police Officers, Assistant

Chief Constables or above actually have to take command of incidents; so the notion of putting them all into one place in mid Wales, for instance, simply is not practically sensible. There would have to be some form of dispersal of Chief Officers. Another principle, the number of regional commanders, would need to be defined and subjected to further research and analysis. There is work going on by Mr Scott Lee, the Chief Constable of West Midlands, who is doing work looking at command and governance structures as part of this process. Strategy and policy will be determined and set up a national tier. That would include the Head of the Police Service, Deputy Head and Policy Units. The proposed structure: there are some issues there about whether the current ACPO structure fits what would be required. I am trying not to give every single one here. Specialist back office support functions could be dispersed around the country again rather than have everybody in a single building, wherever it may be; and that strong consideration should be given to locating these in areas of high unemployment and deprivation with a provision that a prerequisite skills base is available in the locality. There are a number of other issues, but those are the critical ones that came out.

Q51 Chairman: Have you had any feedback from the Home Office about these principles that are so important to you?

Chief Constable Grange: We understand that the issue of the ACPO rank structure will be looked at but that is so far as it goes. The rest are internal; the new Force to work through; it is the level of ACPO officers that would need to be debated with the Home Office under the restructure. It is worth bearing in mind that we would equate there with the other devolved assemblies, which includes the Metropolitan Police which has a different rank structure to the rest of England.

Q52 Chairman: Did you share these agreed principles with the Secretary of State for Wales in your meeting?

Chief Constable Grange: I did not discuss them with him, no. They would be in any paper that went. He gets a copy of the papers that were sent.

Chief Constable Wilding: I discussed in outline these sorts of principles when I spoke to him.

Q53 Chairman: His feedback?

Chief Constable Wilding: Just to acknowledge them, that that was our thinking at that time.

Q54 Chairman: Almost finally, we have received a written submission from the Police Authorities of Wales, they presented “*Connecting Policing to Communities—a model for Wales*” and I assume that you have seen this paper? Do you have any views on the paper and, in particular, on the whole question of regional accountability in the event of the creation of an all Wales Force?

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Chief Constable Grange: We tend to have restricted our thinking to regional Police command structures. A regional political authority is more a matter for political authority in debate with the Home Secretary. I do not think we would want a plethora of committees or authorities but rather a Police Authority for Wales. If there were to be a regional structure underneath that then we would want regional sub-committees that made sense within the concept of one Police Authority for Wales. I do not believe we see any great mileage in lots of different authorities. There would need to be a clear understanding of what each of those subordinate groups did, but that would be a discussion more between the Home Office and Police Authorities and possibly the Welsh Assembly Government than us.

Q55 Chairman: Can I end by asking you all to give your personal views on an all Wales Police Force?

Chief Constable Grange: If I were to be asked outwith the discussion we are having now to structure policing in Wales and to do so over a reasonable period of time then I would ask myself why there are four Police Forces in Wales. One would probably be the best in all honesty.

Chief Constable Tonge: I am very proud of the approach we have had in Wales. We are the only region, so far as I am aware, in England and Wales that has worked to the regions. As for a plan that could work for the regions and provide the safeguards we are looking for in terms of funding and in terms of governance and the way it is structured, then I think our plan could deliver a single Force for Wales that would work. If the funding is not there then we await developments on that. If you look at the bleak financial settlement the Police Service faces not just for the next two years but longer term, then we have more chance to give

the public a policing service it desires by looking at the efficiencies of merging the four Forces than we have standing as four Forces alone.

Chief Constable Brunstrom: I feel that, starting again with a new map of Wales, there is a very great deal of logic to a single Police Force for Wales. My concern is around whether there is enough room for manoeuvre, for negotiation and for consultation to give legitimate expression to local identity and local accountability. I think there are good reasons for there being four Police Forces in Wales at the moment and there may be good reasons for local accountability continuing, but unfortunately there is not enough information available at the moment to see whether suitable arrangements can be made within a one Force solution to enable genuine local determination of local policing. I cannot give you a straight answer, sir. I can see very good reasons for a single Force, but unless there is more information coming out from the Home Office then I cannot see the justification for the change.

Chief Constable Wilding: Having looked at the evidence that we have amassed so far, I believe there is a compelling case for moving to one Force for Wales on the basis of effective and efficient operations. I think the real issue is exactly as I said when I appeared before your Committee last time, it is the governance issue. I do not believe, as I have said earlier in this debate, that you can separate local policing from Level 2. Therefore I believe that this whole exercise must be about improving local policing and improving Level 2 capacity and capability. All the evidence we have seen so far suggests that the one Force for Wales provides that.

Chairman: May I thank you on behalf of the Committee for the evidence that you have given. We would be very pleased to receive any additional written evidence that you would like to submit, however brief.

Written Evidence from the Police Authorities of Wales

EVIDENCE TO THE WELSH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE POLICE FORCES IN WALES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee on Proposed Changes to the Police Forces in Wales.

2. Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) is a representative body of the four Police Authorities in Wales: Gwent Police Authority, Dyfed-Powys Police Authority, North Wales Police Authority and South Wales Police Authority. The main aims of PAW are to:

- Consider and act upon issues affecting policing in Wales, particularly those that are under the control of the National Assembly for Wales.
- Maintain a broad Welsh prospectus on police matters.
- Promote and protect the interests of member Authorities.
- Seek to influence the policing agenda at a national level on behalf of Police Authorities and local communities in Wales.
- Support Police Authorities in securing efficient and effective policing services across Wales.
- Enable Police Authorities to improve.
- Promote awareness of policing needs and the role and achievements of Police Authorities.

- Uphold and champion the principles of local accountability and policing by consent.
3. The Statutory responsibilities of Police Authorities are attached at Appendix A. As an overview, however, Police Authorities are responsible for:
- Setting the budget for their police force, including the levels of council tax.
 - Appointing and dismissing the Chief Constable.
 - Determining the strategic direction for local policing through three year and annual plans.
 - Consulting local people about what they think are the most important things the police should be doing and setting local and policing priorities in light of that consultation.
 - Setting their force challenging targets to drive performance higher.
 - Continuously monitor force performance against those targets and regularly report to local people on how well the force is doing.
4. Police Authorities are made up of Councillors, Lay Justices and Independent Members, and essentially they provide the link between the community and the Police Force.

BACKGROUND

5. HMIC's report, "Closing the Gap: A Review of the 'Fitness for Purpose' of the Current Structure of Policing in England and Wales" provides a professional assessment on the preparedness of the 43 Police Forces in England and Wales to deal with the long term issues around protective services. Protective services are defined as:

- Counter terrorism and extremism
 - Serious organised and cross border crime
 - Civil contingencies and emergency planning
 - Critical incident management
 - Major crime (homicide)
 - Public order
 - Strategic roads policing
6. The report framed its work within the three-tier model of criminality commonly adopted across the police service, where:
- Level 1 Local issues—usually crime, criminals, anti-social behaviour and a concomitant need for reassurance—that can be managed within a Basic Command Unit (BCU).
 - Level 2 Cross-border issues; usually arising from organised criminality, major incidents and events affecting more than one BCU and potentially across boundaries into neighbouring forces. This can also include issues of wider public disquiet, notwithstanding that the original incident might otherwise be categorised as Level 1.
 - Level 3 Serious and organised crime, terrorism or other extremist activity operating on a national or international level. This can also include major incidents, events and other issues of widespread national concern, often with national media coverage, that can seriously undermine confidence on a wider scale.

7. While the four Police Forces in Wales are performing well, especially in terms of Level 1 crime, the HMIC report raised question marks over the capability and capacity of the Forces, to deliver protective services in Wales (Level 2). The view of the report was that in order to meet the required standards across the seven protective services measured, a minimum of 4,000 officers or 6,000 officers/staff combined was required.

8. In light of its findings, HMIC recommended the restructure of the 43 Forces in England and Wales. The report puts forward a set of options for change, supported by a number of design considerations which could enable the creation of a strong configuration which supports dynamic protective services and the necessary development of neighbourhood policing.

9. The five options for change as detailed in the report are as follows:

- Collaboration
- Lead force for specialist capabilities
- Lead regional forces
- Federation of forces
- Strategic forces

10. HMIC concludes that of the five options, the creation of strategic forces with the appropriate accountability mechanisms at the strategic and local level "offers the best business solution. It offers the best potential, within reasonable time-scales, of improving protective services and providing better value for money."

11. The Home Secretary accepted the findings of the HMIC report and its conclusion that the creation of strategic forces offered the best solution. Police Forces and Police Authorities have been requested to consider future policing structures in three key phases:

- By the end of October 2005—to identify a shortlist of the most promising options for change within each region.
- By the end of November 2005—to narrow initial submissions to one favoured option.
- By 23 December 2005—to produce a final report and outline business case for the preferred option for change.

12. The parameters set by the Home Secretary are:

- That the probable solution is for “strategic forces” with a minimum of 4,000 officers or 6,000 officers/staff combined
- That the proposals should not split existing Forces
- That proposals should not cross Government Regional Office Boundaries

13. The Home Secretary has indicated that he is prepared to consider proposals which did not meet the above parameters, but that a compelling business case would have to be made.

14. In response to the Home Secretary’s request the four Welsh Police Forces and Police Authorities have been working together to address the many issues involved in the proposals for restructure. All four Police Authorities are represented on a Programme Board comprising the four Chairs and four Chief Constables. The Board is assisted by a Project Team which includes specialists from policing across Wales led by Deputy Chief Constable Paul Wood and also the Secretary of PAW, Mr Alan Fry.

15. A number of meetings, conferences, seminar and workshops have been held to identify, evaluate and assess all the options for policing structures in Wales in the future. As part of this process a range of stakeholders have been engaged from across the police service and authorities, as well as from the Welsh Local Government Association, SOLACE Wales, Local Criminal Justice Boards, Crime Reduction Director and the Welsh Assembly Government.

16. The evaluation and assessment of options for change has had to be done against a standard assessment framework, against which each option has been scored. The attributes and weightings of the framework are as follows:

- Capacity 5
- Capability 5
- Performance 4
- Criminality 4
- Geography *3
- Co-terminosity 4
- Identity *3
- Governance 5
- Economic 4
- Risk 4

17. The framework allowed for local discretion as to the weightings of any two attributes and as such increases were made to the Geography and Identity attributes to help take account of the particular dimensions of Wales.

18. As a result of this assessment process, the three options which scored the highest, along with the option for no change, which would automatically be submitted as a proposal to the Home Secretary, were considered by the Programme Board at a meeting on 19 October 2005. The four options were as follows:

- No change: maintaining the status quo as four existing police forces/authorities
- Two forces: a merger between North Wales and Dyfed-Powys; and a merger between South Wales and Gwent
- Two forces: a merger between North Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent; with South Wales remaining as a stand-alone force/authority
- A single police force/authority for Wales

19. Based on the strict assessment model set by the Home Office, the option for a single Police Force/ Authority scored the highest by a considerable margin.

20. Following discussions at the meeting of the Programme Board, it was agreed to remove the option of Two forces with South Wales standing alone as a force/authority. The remaining three options for change were then put forward in a report for consideration by the Home Secretary.

NORTH WALES

21. The three options which were been put forward by the Programme Board for further consideration were put forward with the approval of the four Police Authorities. However, North Wales Police Authority also submitted a variation of option 1, which is the retention of the North Wales Police Force and the development of a close partnership arrangement with the Cheshire Constabulary.

22. North Wales does have strong links with North West England in terms of transport links, movement of people and, regrettably, criminality and those links are stronger than with other Force Areas in Wales. North Wales already has a close working relationship with the Cheshire Constabulary and the combined workforce of Police Officers and Staff is in excess of the figure of 6,000 identified by HMIC. Whilst a merger with the Cheshire Constabulary would clearly not be an acceptable option, North Wales Police Authority decided to explore the merits of developing partnership arrangements in order to address the need which the Home Secretary has rightly identified, to provide protective services.

HOME SECRETARY'S RESPONSE AND SECOND PHASE OF THE REVIEW

23. The Home Secretary has considered the short-listed options provided during the first phase of the review and has written to forces and authorities setting out his response to the options. In terms of the Welsh submission, feedback from the Home Office indicates that they have initially assessed only the single force option as suitable for progression. However, the Home Office have stated that it is a matter for Police Authorities as to what options continue to be evaluated. Following agreement from the four Police Authorities the project team continued to examine and assess all the short-listed options.

24. The second phase has concentrated on the North Wales/Cheshire issues, public and partner consultation and firming up the operational and financial work outlined in the first business case submitted in October.

25. The Programme Board considered a draft Business Case at a meeting on 22 November 2005. Following this meeting, the finalised Business Case will be presented to each individual Police Authority. Each Police Authority will then consider if they can agree a preferred option at this stage. In a letter to Police Authorities on 21 November the Home Secretary informed Authorities that he was relaxing the November deadline in recognition of the fact that many Forces and Authorities will not have fully developed their preferred options and business cases and will still be consulting on them into December. There is still, however, the requirement for the Business Case to be submitted.

26. To date, two of the four Police Authorities have considered the draft Business Case. Gwent Police Authority considered the report at a meeting on 25 November 2005. At that meeting, Members did not agree to a preferred option. Members did agree, however, to raise a number of key issues with the Home Secretary, namely Human Resources, finance, police precepts. South Wales Police Authority considered the report at a meeting on 28 November 2005. At that meeting, Members did not agree a preferred option and raised similar concerns regarding governance, finance and police precepts. Dyfed Powys Police Authority and North Wales Police Authority will consider the report on 29 and 30 November 2005 respectively.

27. At an Association of Police Authorities (APA) meeting of Police Authority Chairs on 23 November 2005, the following APA position statement was agreed:

- That the APA will remain constructively engaged in the process, but would not recommend consideration of voluntary mergers to its member authorities until authorities' concerns, as set out below, are satisfactorily answered.
- That a satisfactory response is required from Government in time for the APA Chairs' Summit on 7 December around issues of governance, local accountability, human resources and finance (including start up costs, transitional costs and precept equalisation). This is critical to moving towards a position where the APA is able to recommend consideration of voluntary mergers to any of its constituent authorities.
- That well founded and informed concerns should continue to be expressed, both publicly and privately by police authorities and the APA, about the timescales and handling of the process, and that we should seek to extend the consultation process to:
 - give our communities sufficient time and scope to engage in the deliberations;
 - provide partners and stakeholders an opportunity to influence the decision making process;
 - take into account the views and concerns of officers and staff; and
 - allow for a full democratic parliamentary debate.
- That the scope of HMIC's report "Closing the Gap" focused on operational issues and did not fully address issues of finance or governance.
- That significant efforts will be invested by the APA in improving communications with authorities and with communities in relation to issues on restructuring.
- That we welcome the Home Secretary's response to the APA's request to relax the November deadline and his willingness to consider all options put forward by police authorities in December.

POLICE AUTHORITIES OF WALES—KEY PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING CHANGE

28. Police Authorities of Wales (PAW) acknowledges that the structure of policing in Wales has to be reviewed in order to ensure a police service which is fit for the purpose of policing in the 21st Century. PAW recognises that we need much more effective, more streamlined command/control and governance structures above the current force configuration.

29. At the same time, however, PAW would stress that any changes must be locally developed and owned if they are to be effective and should be underpinned by the following principles agreed by the Association of Police Authorities (APA):

- One size does not fit all: there is a need for a well-argued business case for change
- Any new structural arrangements must be robust and supported by appropriate resourcing, and include:
 - Development of robust performance monitoring arrangements for protective services
- A serious consideration should be given to:
 - Co-terminosity with other local public services
 - Need to be able to respond to local pressures
 - Accountability at all levels—force, BCU, CSP
 - Chief Officers to be accountable to and appointable by the Police Authority
- There needs to be clear mechanisms and balances to support good governance within the context of a tripartite structure
- There will need to be evidence that new structures will provide effective and efficient delivery service with positive outcomes for the public and robust internal systems that identify the links between levels 1, 2, 3
- Ultimately the need to ensure whatever is put in place provides a quality police service for all.

30. Any proposed changes should also take account of consultation with local communities and partners. Any changes to policing in Wales are going to need public support and an understanding of the issues involved in a major re-organisation of the kind proposed. Moreover, Police Authorities have a duty to consult with communities and provide a policing service which communities want. The four Police Authorities take this responsibility very seriously and have done their best to obtain the views of communities and feed them into the review process to ensure they help influence any final decisions made on policing in Wales. This, however, is a difficult process, not least due to the extreme speed of the review. PAW firmly believes, however, that it is imperative that the public are fully involved in any changes to their policing service. Each Police Authority has made arrangements for a series of consultation meetings during November and into December. The outcomes of these consultations will be reported to the Committee during the oral evidence session on 6 December 2005.

31. However, all Police Authorities have concerns that due to the timetable and key milestone dates set by the Home Secretary, a proper meaningful community consultation exercise has not been possible even with the relaxation in the timetable as detailed in the letter from the Home Secretary. Moreover, there is uncertainty amongst the Police Authorities as to how the results of the consultation exercises will be factored in to the assessment toolkit.

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

32. While the impetus for change is to “close the gap” in tackling level 2 crime, PAW is adamant that focus will be maintained on developing the neighbourhood policing agenda and will ensure that during any reorganisation, policing at the local level becomes embedded and strengthened. To ensure this, PAW will be recommending that the accountability structures in any new organisational arrangement starts at the neighbourhood level.

33. Connecting policing to communities and to civic leadership is vital. Police authorities are currently local enough to make the connections but also able to see the bigger strategic picture. The more remote the accountable body, the less in tune it can be with the communities it serves.

34. PAW see police authorities as playing a key role in enabling and facilitating neighbourhood policing—which is still in its infancy—to fully engage with citizens and ensure that the service listens and responds to all the different strands of opinion and views locally. We see, for example Policing/Community Safety Boards at BCU/CSP level of the sort which some authorities are currently piloting (North Wales and South Wales) with APA support, interacting with those neighbourhoods and with local government and other partners, to set a credible local policing agenda led by local stakeholders.

35. CSPs, comprising the Executive Heads of local services should, of course, continue to run the day to day business of joint tasking and implementation of services, but should do so in line with priorities set by local communities through these Policing/Community Safety Boards. This would help tackle the lack of

responsiveness, accountability and transparency to local people identified in the recent Review of the Crime and Disorder Act. In Wales, for this to work effectively, consideration will have to be given to providing the CSP's with a legal identity, which is missing at present.

THE WELSH DIMENSION

36. PAW also believes that in considering the HMIC report and its recommendations for restructure, the distinctions and differences that exist between England and Wales need to be fully acknowledged. When you apply some of the criteria used to assess forces in the HMIC review such as size of force, capacity and capability to meet demand; and consistency with regional boundaries to specific areas on the map, they do not easily fit the position in Wales.

37. There needs to be a clear recognition of Wales' distinctive position and the different environment in which we are working in Wales. Due attention needs to be given to the political environment in Wales, not least the role and interests of the Welsh Assembly Government, and the more immediate prospect of the review into public services in Wales being conducted by Sir Jeremy Beecham needs also to be considered. Interestingly, Sir Jeremy in a recent article for *Agenda* made the following point:

“The policy and governance context in England is different from Wales, but the concern with delivery is the same, including the increasing focus on communicating more effectively with people at local level. I'm learning rapidly that the devolved context and geography present a set of challenges and opportunities that are unique to Wales.”

38. In addition to the political context, Wales also possesses a strong sense of national identity alongside significant local and cultural differences. Ultimately, it needs to be recognised in Whitehall that Wales is a nation and not a region. Moreover, this fact affects the way the national criteria may need to be applied in Wales.

39. Should the option for the creation of one, or even two, strategic forces be put forward as the preferred option for change, PAW is of the view that some sort of regional governance and accountability structure would have to be implemented above the neighbourhood level and below the strategic level. A draft Governance and Accountability Model for Wales was discussed at a meeting of PAW on 14 October 2005. This model (attached at Appendix B) sets out how PAW sees governance and accountability arrangements operating from the neighbourhood to the strategic level. The Model also includes, for illustration purposes only, how the composition of a strategic Police Authority underpinned by Regional Committees might be shaped.

40. It is absolutely essential to have a regional tier of administration for the following reasons:

- We have a devolved Government and must work in partnership with both the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association. Our regional committees would be based on the their Regional Partnership Boards which are themselves currently under review;
- To “close the gap” that would otherwise result in a huge geographical and diverse area; and
- To provide effective and streamlined day to day administration of the Strategic Police Authority's policies, practices and directions.
- To reflect regional differences in Wales.
- To effectively link with operational policing structures.

41. PAW would also emphasise that there are currently 72 Police Authority Members serving on the four Police Authorities of Dyfed Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales. In the White Paper “Building Safer Communities” the Government were critical of the fact that Police Authority Members were often seen to be remote and little known to the public. It is understood by the APA that the Home Secretary will only allow for marginal increases in the standard size of Police Authority membership (ie 17/19 Members) for a new Strategic Police Authority which contradicts the Government's findings and will compound the situation. It would also result in a significant number of local authorities failing to secure representation should there be only one Strategic Police Authority for Wales. This would be a far from acceptable situation particularly at budget and council tax setting time.

42. PAW hopes that the WAG, the WLGA and the Welsh Affairs Committee supports this Model as it believes that a real opportunity now exists to set a common Regional map for effective collaborative working between public bodies in Wales.

43. PAW also has concerns about future funding arrangements that may flow from any restructuring proposals. The exercise that is currently being undertaken involves:

- “Closing the Gap” at Level 2—requires additional resources
- Delivering the Neighbourhood Policing agenda—requires additional resources
- Considering the implications of restructuring, including the identification of savings from merging either into 2 Forces or 1 all-Wales Force

Although in the long term savings may accrue from efficiencies and economies of scale realised through rationalisation of back office facilities, significant start up costs and ongoing additional recurring costs means that additional funding will have to be secured if policing in Wales is not to suffer. The October submission to the Home Office states that the objectives set out by the Home Secretary will not be delivered without the injection of central resources. There are also a number of underlying issues of concern regarding the funding of policing in Wales and these are set out at Appendix C.

44. Similarly the issue of equalising Council Tax may have to be addressed. At present the Council Tax precepts for policing in Wales vary significantly, as the following Band “D” levels for 2005–06 show:

South Wales	—	£120 per annum
Dyfed Powys	—	£143 per annum
Gwent	—	£145 per annum
North Wales	—	£158 per annum

45. PAW is also concerned that consideration of issues relating to funding for set up costs, transitional costs and ongoing additional costs by the Home Office will not commence before the New Year. The absence of any information on additional funding from the Home Office is a cause of major concern and the absence of this information is a severe impediment to meaningful consultation with Council Tax payers in Wales.

NEXT STEPS

46. The final report must be presented to the Home Secretary by 23 December 2005. It is understood that the date proposed for the implementation of changes in the structure of the Constabulary is April 2007, should Police Authorities decide to merge voluntarily. Under provisions set out in sections 32 to 34 of the Police Reform Act 1996, a request to the Home Secretary for voluntary amalgamations of Forces/Authorities can only be made by Police Authorities. If this request is not made, the Home Secretary is required to give Police Authorities four months notice if he decides to impose amalgamations.

47. The four Police Authorities have considered their involvement in the review thus far, to be vitally important and are committed to continuing this participation. PAW will seek to ensure that views of Police Authorities continue to be sought, valued and given full consideration.

48. The Police Authorities of Wales are grateful for the opportunity to submit evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee and hopes that the above is helpful. PAW would be happy, however, to elaborate or provide further information which may be of benefit.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF POLICE AUTHORITY STATUTORY DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES

THE POLICE AUTHORITY’S THREE KEY FUNCTIONS ARE:

- To secure an efficient and effective Police Service (Section 6, Police Act 1996).
- To secure Best Value ie continuous improvement in the way (its functions) are exercised having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Section 3, Local Government Act 1999).
- To make arrangements for obtaining:
 - the views of local people about the policing of their area; and
 - the co-operation of local people in preventing crime.

(Section 96, Police Act 1996)

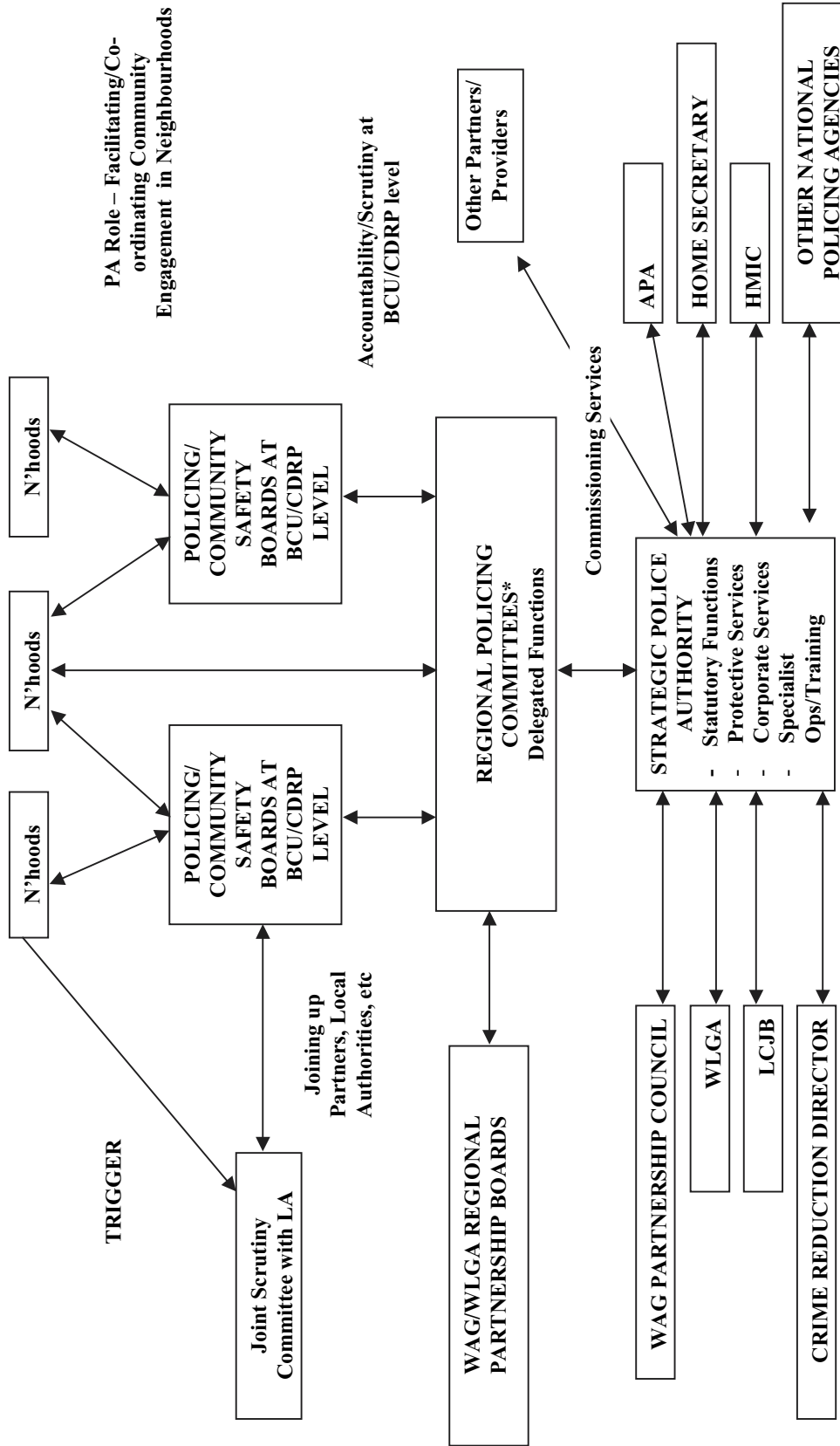
The Authority has a whole range of statutory duties which underpin these functions. The following is not an exhaustive list—in particular, it does not detail procedural matters under Local Government legislation or those relating to the appointment or responsibilities of Police Authority Officers/Staff under Police/Local Government legislation. Instead, it focuses on key responsibilities that the Police Authority is required to fulfil as part of its functions. These are:

1. To determine the local priorities for policing—after consulting local people and the Chief Constable (Section 7, Police Act 1996).
2. To publish an Annual Policing Plan including Ministerial Priorities, local policing objectives and any performance targets set by the Authority and including Best Value Performance Plan (Section 8, Police Act 1996 & Section 6, Local Government Act 1999 and associated Regulations).
3. To report back to the community at the end of the year on the extent to which the Policing/Best Value Performance Plan has been met (Section 9, Police Act 1996).
4. To appoint and dismiss the Chief Constable and subject to the approval of the Secretary of State (Section 11, Police Act 1996).
5. To appoint and dismiss the Deputy Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constables (Section 12, Police Act 1996 and Police Regulations).

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6. To hold the Police Fund and maintain accounts (Section 14, Police Act 1996 and Section 40, Local Government Finance Act 1992).
 7. To nominate one or more Members of the Authority to answer questions on the discharge of the Authority's functions at a meeting of a relevant Council when given reasonable notice of this by the Council (Section 20, Police Act 1996).
 8. To collaborate with other Police Authorities to jointly provide equipment, premises, to other material facilities, where appropriate (Section 23, Police Act 1996).
 9. To decide the charges for the provision of special Police Services (Section 25, Police Act 1996).
 10. To provide advice and assistance to an international organisation, institution or a police body outside the UK (includes secondment of Police Officers), subject to the consent of the Home Secretary (Section 26, Police Act 1996). The Authority can charge for such advice/assistance.
 11. To comply with any direction given by the Secretary of State on performance targets for Ministerial priorities (Section 38, Police Act 1996).
 12. To comply with any Codes of Practice issued by the Secretary of State relating to the discharge of Police Authority functions (Section 39, Police Act 1996).
 13. To comply with any direction made by the Secretary of State following an adverse report by HMIC ie that the force is not, or will cease to be, effective or efficient (Section 40, Police Act 1996).
 14. To comply with any direction made by the Secretary of State as to the budget requirement (Section 41, Police Act 1996).
 15. To comment on any HMIC report on the Force and any comments made by the Chief Officer about the report and to publish those comments (Section 55 Police Act 1996).
 16. To investigate complaints about the conduct of ACPO officers (Section 68, Police Act 1996) or where appropriate refer complaints to the PCA (Section 70, Police Act 1996).
 17. To keep itself informed of the workings of the complaints and discipline procedures (Section 77, Police Act 1996).
 18. To have regard to any guidance issued by the Home Secretary on complaints or disciplinary matters (Sections 83 & 87 Police Act 1996).
 19. To pay out of the Police Fund, in such cases and to such extent as it thinks appropriate, any damages or costs awarded against the police in respect of torts or in relation to the settlement of a claim (Section 88, Police Act 1996).
 20. To receive grants from any local Council which falls wholly or partly within the Authority area either unconditionally or, subject to conditions agreed with the Chief Officer of Police (Section 92, Police Act 1996).
 21. To accept gifts of money or gifts and loans of other property, including commercial sponsorship of any activity of the Authority or force on such terms as appear to it to be appropriate (Section 93, Police Act 1996).
 22. To conduct Best Value Reviews of its functions in accordance with any order made by the Secretary of State (Section 5, LGA 1999).
 23. To publish any audit report on its Best Value Performance Plan (Section 9, LGA 1999).
 24. To work with other "responsible authorities" in formulating and implementing crime and disorder audits and strategies for each Unitary Council in its area (Section 5, Crime & Disorder Act 1998).
 25. To exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998).
 26. To comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
 27. To have due regard of the need to:
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
 - Promote equality of opportunity and good relations of persons of different racial groups. (Section 2, Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000)
 28. To maintain an effective Independent Custody Visitors Scheme.
 29. To maintain an effective Animal Welfare Visiting Scheme (non-statutory).

APPENDIX B

CONNECTING POLICING TO COMMUNITIES – A MODEL FOR WALES



**REGIONAL POLICING COMMITTEES TO BE BASED ON WAG/WLGA REGIONS*

CONNECTING POLICING TO COMMUNITIES—MODEL FOR WALES

POSSIBLE COMPOSITION OF MEMBERS

Strategic Police Authority

There are 22 local authorities in Wales. Each should have at least one representative particularly when debates surround setting of the precept and Council Tax.

There is, of course, an argument that larger local authorities should have a proportionately greater representation based on their population but for this exercise this factor is ignored.

The Police Act 1996 allows the Home Secretary to determine the membership of a Police Authority within prescribed parameters. If he is persuaded by the argument above then the 22 Councillor Members would, in accord with existing legislation, have to be joined by 14 Independent Members and seven Magistrates.

This would take the overall membership of the Strategic Police Authority to 43; it would not make a streamlined efficient administration but would have a strong measure of democratic legitimacy. It does, however, pointedly show the need for Regional Committees to implement the day to day administration of the Strategic Police Authority's policies.

Regional Committees

The composition would be determined on the number of regions; which in reality are probably either three or four.

By way of illustration only the position based on three regions reflecting the Fire Service boundaries in Wales could produce the possible (and approximate) compositions:

South Wales	—	10 Councillors, 3 Magistrates and 6 Independents	Total = 19
Mid & West Wales	—	Councillors, 2 Magistrates and 4 Independents	Total = 12
North Wales	—	6 Councillors, 2 Magistrates and 4 Independents	Total = 12

Footnote: the Councils which comprise the above areas are as follows:

South Wales:—Monmouth, Torfaen, Newport, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Bridgend (10).

Population: 1,394,000

Mid & West Wales:—Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot (6).

Population: 846,000

North Wales:—Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham (6).

Population: 663,000

CONNECTING POLICING TO COMMUNITIES—MODEL FOR WALES

DIVISION OF SUMMARY OF RESPONSIBILITIES

STRATEGIC POLICE AUTHORITY

1. The Body Corporate (Statutory Functions, acting as Employer, holding property etc.)
2. Maintaining an effective and efficient police service.
3. Holding and setting the budget.
4. Working with national agencies.
5. Setting policy and strategic direction.
6. Issuing an Annual Plan and Annual Report.
7. Ensuring Best Value.
8. Appointing and dismissing Chief Officers.
9. Investigating complaints against Chief Officers.
10. Appointing Independent and Lay Justice Members.
11. Establishing a Code of Conduct and maintaining high ethical standards.
12. Establishing a Race Equality Scheme for Wales and responsibility for all diversity matters.
13. Establishing and promoting a composite Welsh Language Scheme.

REGIONAL COMMITTEES

1. Closing the significant geographical/cultural governance and accountability gap between strategic and BCU levels.
2. Administering and implementing strategic Police Authority's policies at regional and BCU levels (ie acting on delegated powers with no direct functional responsibilities).
3. Working with WAG/WLGA and other partners at regional level.
4. Monitoring of regional and local performance.
5. Providing accountability and scrutiny at BCU level including holding Community Safety Partnerships to account.
6. Setting and overseeing effective and consistent consultation and engagement with the communities within the region to take account of local diversity.
7. Producing and disseminating information to the public so that within the region there is good understanding of how policing is being delivered and how the public can access, engage and influence local policing.
8. Consulted upon appointments of Divisional/BCU Commanders.

BCU/CSP BOARDS

1. Facilitating and co-ordinating community engagement within neighbourhoods.
2. Setting and monitoring local targets, objectives and priorities in tune with local communities wishes.
3. Harnessing local support, assistance and involvement.
4. Participating in "trigger mechanism" when public dissatisfaction displayed with local service delivery.

APPENDIX C

UNDERLYING ISSUES OF CONCERN RELATING TO POLICE FUNDING IN WALES

1. Each of the Welsh Forces is currently below the "floor" in terms of the settlement position. This has necessitated the Home Office having to allocate a Special Grant to Welsh forces amounting to £13.873 million.
2. The adverse position for the Forces in terms of formula settlement described above has meant that there have been significant increases in Council Tax levels over the last three years. These levels of increase are not sustainable.
3. A review of the Formula Grant system in England including the Police Grant for police forces in England and Wales has produced draft proposals that are largely detrimental for all forces except South Wales.
4. The four forces have historically delivered in terms of efficiency plans. It is, however, becoming increasingly clear that continued achievement would not be sustainable without greatly increased degrees of collaboration particularly in terms of back office functions. Whilst Wales has a good record in terms of collaboration across many areas, the present legislative framework and different IT systems have tended to militate against any collaboration on a large scale.

29 November 2005

Written Evidence from Geraint Price Thomas OBE, Gwent Police Authority, on behalf of the four Police Authority Chairs in Wales

Following the commitment given by representatives of the Police Authorities of Wales at the oral evidence session with the Welsh Affairs Committee on 6 December 2005, I am writing to provide additional information in respect of the proposed changes to police forces in England and Wales.

The Project Team in Wales, which has been progressing the review into force structures, submitted to the Home Office a Business Case at the end of November, in line with the Home Secretary's timetable. In this Business Case, three options for structural change were submitted. At this stage the Police Authorities were not able either to offer a preferred option or endorse the submission in light of the following:

- The stated absence of Government financial support for the cost of change and detailed information on the overall funding position for the implementation of key policing policies;
- An inadequate period of consultation with Forces and Police Authorities on the proposals in the HMIC report "Closing the Gap";
- An even more inadequate period for meaningful consultation with the public;
- The views of the public expressed in consultation to date;

-
- Concerns about the reduction of existing levels of service arising through any merger;
 - A proposed timetable for change which is unrealistic;
 - A lack of appreciation by the Home Office of the local and cultural differences and national identity that Wales possesses, requiring an encompassing approach to governance in respect of proposals for merged Authorities.
 - Serious concerns regarding accountabilities and local authority representation.

It is hoped that the Project Team will be able to work through these issues with central government but additionally set out below are critical issues which need resolution before any options for change can realistically be proposed:

COUNCIL TAX

This is a key emerging issue from consultation undertaken with members of the public and police/local authorities. Any move to a one or two force structure for policing in Wales will require an equalisation of Council Tax. How will this be done to ensure fairness and equity? We welcome the initiative to set up a working group to look at this issue and would appreciate representation on such a group.

COST OF CHANGE

The set up and recurring costs of closing the level two gap across Wales are significant under any option for change. Level one and level two issues are intrinsically linked and given that level one must not be denuded and the further investment that is needed in Neighbourhood Policing how is it proposed that these extra costs will be met?

BUDGET/COUNCIL TAX

A key responsibility of Police Authorities is the setting of the budget/Council Tax. Are there any planned changes in this democratic arrangement as part of any change to police force structures?

MEMBERSHIP OF POLICE AUTHORITIES

The membership of any strategic Police Authority has been identified as a key issue through our consultation processes with members of the public. There is overwhelming support for an inclusive democratic arrangement that enables all local authorities in Wales to be represented. This will require 43 members in an All Wales Strategic Police Authority.

LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Wales is a country and not a region and has its own national identity, language and culture. There are compelling reasons to recognise that this requires a different approach to accountability in respect of a regional command and governance structure. In terms of a Pan Wales force the following governance structure is needed:

1. Neighbourhood panels
2. Policing/Community Safety Partnership Boards
3. Regional Committees
4. Strategic Police Authority

This structure has been presented and discussed with the Welsh Assembly Government. The WLGA has also expressed its support for the structure.

RE-INVESTMENT OF EFFICIENCY SAVINGS

Police Authorities must be able to retain efficiency savings from back offices to re-invest into front line service delivery and to meet in part the increasing demands for service improvement from the Home Office.

PARTNER AGENCY BOUNDARIES

There is no co-terminosity of partner/agency boundaries in Wales. The effectiveness of a one or two force arrangement for policing Wales would be greatly enhanced with a unification of such boundaries. This is a matter for both central government and the Welsh Assembly Government.

 FUTURE BUDGET SETTLEMENTS/FORMULA FUNDING

A Pan Wales force could be the sparsest region in terms of population density. How will this be dealt with in the funding formula and will there be an adverse affect on future budget settlements. With the creation of larger Strategic Force(s) for Wales, initial settlements will be equal to the sum of existing Force settlements in the medium term. In the longer term (post 2008), settlements depend on the approach adopted at the Home Office for resource allocation as well as the environmental characteristics and number of Forces in England and Wales. It is not possible at this stage to quantify the impact of any reconfiguration on funding levels. This work needs to be progressed by the Allocation Formula Working Group before any final decisions are made. Analysis by the project team indicates that a Strategic Welsh Force would have the highest level of population sparsity of any of the options being progressed across England and Wales. Application of the current principles underpinning the current formula mechanism would, if not amended, result in a potentially massive loss in funding.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT/BENEFITS REALISATION

Whilst there are clear operational and organisational benefits aligned to a two or one force structure, there must be recognition that these benefits will not materialise in the short term and will require significant pump priming.

TRANSITIONAL PERFORMANCE

Any move towards a new structure of policing in Wales will need existing forces to maintain a keen perspective of performance balanced against the need to effect transitional change. How will this be considered and will there be any additional provision or relaxation of measures to achieve this?

OTHER CHANGE PRESSURES

The methodology used for this review does not account for the myriad of other operational and financial pressures facing forces particularly affecting local policing eg quality of service commitment.

CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT

As with any change of this nature it is absolutely critical to obtain key internal and external stakeholder engagement to ensure sustainability of any future change. We would seek reassurance from the Home Office that there will be a sensible period for consultation and engagement on the proposals in the New Year.

At this point in time there is some feedback from our consultation exercises indicating that the public consider they are being presented with a “fait accompli” and their views do not count. Government needs to consider how the public can be reassured that the views of the public will be accorded sufficient weight and that sufficient time is allowed for a consultation exercise which the public consider to be meaningful.

RESULTS OF THE POLICE AUTHORITIES’ CONSULTATION EXERCISES

The following table and graph shows a summary of the position for “the preferred option” expressed by the public in South Wales, Dyfed Powys and Gwent. At present only a position statement has been received from North Wales.

	<i>Option 1 Four Forces</i>	<i>Option 2 Two Forces</i>	<i>Option 3 One Force</i>
SWPA Questionnaire	41%	28%	31%
SWPA Ask the Audience	36%	40%	24%
DPPA Questionnaire	72%	12%	16%
DPPA Ask the Audience	70%	13%	17%
GPA Questionnaire	45%	34%	21%

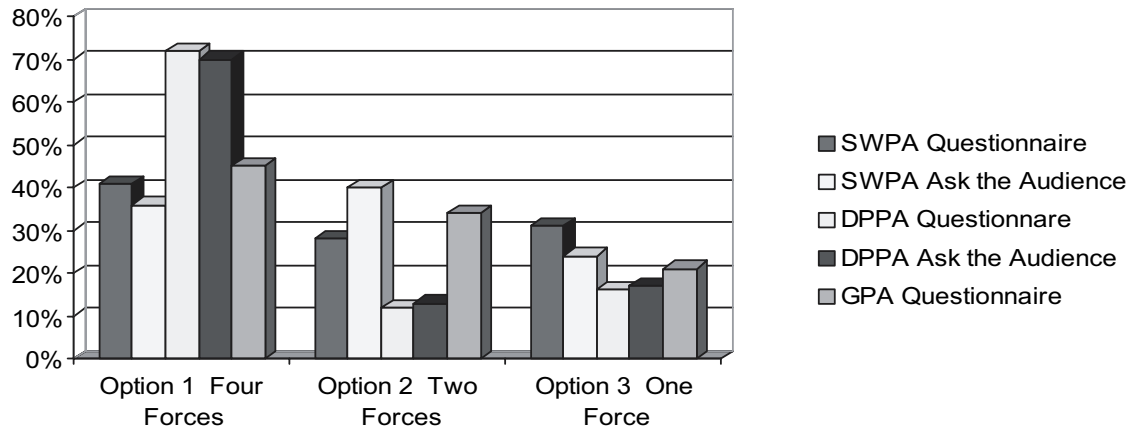


Table and Graph showing the percentage breakdown of preferred option for each consultation exercise.

ASSOCIATION OF POLICE AUTHORITIES' (APA) POSITION

At the APA Summit of Chairs of and Chief Executives of Police Authorities on 7 December, the following resolution was agreed:

- That the APA does not accept that HMIC's Report "Closing the Gap" provides a complete or comprehensive business case for the creation of strategic forces and that the APA will urgently explore alternative models, such as a Federated approach to establish if these offer a quicker, more cost effective approach to improve protective policing services.
- That no police authority will submit a final business case and preferred option on 23 December until they receive the reassurances they need as set out below and have adequate time to complete consultation and business cases.
- That police authorities wish to see a full parliamentary debate before any final submissions are made and look forward to this being confirmed.

GOVERNANCE

Strategic Police Authorities

- That key provisions on membership and functions of police authorities remain laid down in primary legislation
- Confirmation that police authorities will remain precepting authorities

Sub-Strategic Level

- That Strategic Police Authorities will be made responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place for sub-strategic accountability/answerability, with flexibility to suit local needs

FINANCE

Start-Up and Transitional Costs: that Central Government should meet all start-up & transitional costs on an invest to save basis, including proper funding for police authorities and that authorities should not be expected to finance change through borrowing.

Precept Equalisation: that Council tax payers are not disadvantaged and that the costs of equalisation should be met by central government.

Funding Formula: that the current funding formula should be reviewed to ensure that police funding is resilient, fair and adequate in all areas.

16 December 2005

Witnesses: **Councillor Ray Thomas**, Chair, South Wales Police Authority, **Councillor Don Evans**, Chair, Dyfed Powys Police Authority, **Councillor Ian Roberts**, Chair, North Wales Police Authority, **Mr Geraint Price-Thomas OBE**, Chair, Gwent Police Authority, **Ms Jean Wilding**, Treasurer, Dyfed Powys Police Authority, **Ms Shelley Bosson**, Clerk, Gwent Police, gave evidence.

Q56 Chairman: Good morning and welcome to the Welsh Affairs Committee. I wonder if you could all introduce yourselves for the record please.

Mr Price-Thomas: Good morning, Chairman. My name is Geraint Price-Thomas, Chairman of Gwent Police Authority and, by way of a rota, I am the present incumbent of the post of Chair of the Police Authorities of Wales.

Cllr Roberts: Ian Roberts, Chair of the North Wales Police Authority and also Vice Chairman of the Police Authorities of Wales.

Cllr Evans: Don Evans, a Councillor in Pembrokeshire and Chairman of the Dyfed Powys Police Authority.

Cllr Thomas: Ray Thomas, Chairman of the South Wales Police Authority.

Ms Bosson: Shelley Bosson, Chief Executive and Clerk of Gwent Police Authority.

Ms Wilding: Jean Wilding, Treasurer of Dyfed Powys Police Authority and representing treasurers in Wales.

Q57 Chairman: Thank you very much for that. Perhaps we could begin with the HMIC Report and its findings. Do you agree with the report and the Government's assessment of the current "gap" in Level 2 policing, and the proposed restructuring of the Forces in Wales in order to address these operational issues?

Mr Price-Thomas: Without doubt, Chairman. I have been involved in this particular process since September now. For a number of years the Government has been concerned about this issue. If you go back and look at a number of White Papers, this is no great shock. Having looked at the O'Conner paper, there is no doubt in my mind that there is a need to address this particular issue so far as the four Welsh Forces are concerned.

Q58 Chairman: This is a universal view, is it?

Cllr Roberts: Yes.

Cllr Evans: Yes.

Q59 Hywel Williams: What are the potential governance problems and issues that would need to be addressed if there was an all Wales Force?

Mr Price-Thomas: What we have strived to do in the context of the work of the Welsh Police Authorities—and as an organisation that has been going now for some 10 years—is to develop an all Wales dimension as far as we possibly can. Certainly in the context of this particular piece of work we believe that there are aspects of the review that we can apply to the principality. There is a paper that has been produced by the Honorary Secretary to the Police Authority of Wales, Alan Fry, one of the clerks to the Police Authorities, whereby we strive to develop a somewhat different governance arrangement to the principality should we eventually become a strategic Force of one or possibly two strategic Forces. We have put this paper forward at an early stage so that we can

develop a true Welsh dimension to the governance aspect of how the strategic Police Authority can relate to the communities, it can relate to the public and that the public and the communities of Wales can have a democratic input into policing at whatever appropriate tier of policing is appropriate. I have to say that given the lunatic timescale we have been afforded in developing our review in Wales, it is only an initial paper; we will be applying ourselves to further work in refining and developing a governance paper that can take on board the concerns that we have and we will be taking on board, of course, all the consultation reactions we get as the weeks unfold.

Q60 Hywel Williams: Can you give us some examples of some of the problems in terms of governance that you might see?

Mr Price-Thomas: Having listened this morning to the Chief Constables, it does appear to be the operational view that a single Police Force is the firm favourite as it were at the moment and that seems to be the political imperative driving this both from Government and certainly from the Home Office. This is the kind of feeling we have as Chairs in terms of this exercise. We feel that if it is a one Welsh Force and a one Welsh strategic Police Authority for the principality be it in 2007 or 2008 then, given the nature, the geography, the identity and the differences within Wales, you need to have a regional tier of governance between that strategic Force at the all-Wales level and the important links to the local Basic Command Unit at neighbourhood level. That is something that we are keen as four Chairs to promote in a Welsh context and to push this regional dimension in the shape of the governance arrangements that we have in mind. I suspect we will have difficulty with the Home Office here because it was made clear at the end of October, in a letter we received from the Head of the Home Office Central Team, that there was a concern about additional tiers of bureaucracy coming into the equation. I think they have noted there is a Welsh dimension here. They believe we have aspirations to develop a democratically accountable structure of policing for Wales and I think that is something we will have to work at. We will be meeting the Secretary of State this afternoon to take this forward.

Cllr Roberts: From a North Wales perspective, we are jumping ahead a little bit further than we need to at the moment. North Wales would only be going for one Force in North Wales, a regional Force, our own North Wales Force and nothing else at this moment and not going for the one Welsh Force route.

Q61 Hywel Williams: Mr Price-Thomas, in terms of accountability locally on an all-Wales level, how do you see that developing? Do you see it being problematic if you have one Force?

6 December 2005 Councillor Ray Thomas, Councillor Don Evans, Councillor Ian Roberts,
Mr Geraint Price-Thomas OBE, Ms Jean Wilding and Ms Shelley Bosson

Mr Price-Thomas: If we have the one Force it will be a strategic Police Authority, that has been made quite clear. Hazel Blears addressed the national Association of Police Authorities and made it quite clear that there will be a strategic Police Authority and that authority will be in place before any Chief Constable is appointed. We did have concerns that perhaps we would not have that particular process, but we have had it confirmed that there will be a strategic authority first and then a Chief Constable. It is developing in a Welsh context below that tiers of accountability that we are now homing in on. We do feel that the model that is attached to our paper at Appendix B is something that we would wish to take forward in developing a regional tier of accountability and also refined and more modern effective means of accountability at the Basic Command Unit level. We have 17 Basic Command Units at the moment throughout Wales and below that at the neighbourhood level. I think in our table we have described the four tiers whereby we feel we need to engage in further research and work not only within a Welsh context but also throughout the aegis of the Association of Police Authorities. The Home Office themselves are at last beginning to address this important issue of governance. Until now the concentration of effort, it seems to us, has been on this concern they have about sorting out this Level 2 gap. As Chief Constable Brunstrom said this morning, policing in the future and policing as ever is more than just Level 2 and we want to look at a comprehensive restructuring of policing in the round. I think it is vital to get that message over.

Q62 Jessica Morden: How important do you think it is for effective policing that police structures are coterminous with local authorities and Community Safety Partnerships?

Mr Price-Thomas: I think it is critical. One has to have that coterminosity. I am sorry I am labouring the Welsh dimension, Chairman. In the context of the devolved responsibility that the Welsh Assembly Government has and our increasing relationship as Police Authorities and Police Forces with Cardiff and with the Welsh Assembly, it is vitally important that through them and through Welsh local government and the 22 unitary authorities we get better in the future. It may be in the context of this review, if we can get to a sensible conclusion, that things will get better down the road in developing a far more effective community safety/policing agenda for the principality.

Q63 Jessica Morden: You mention in your report that Community Safety Partnerships may need to be given some kind of legal identity. Would you like to expand on this and give us the rationale for that?

Ms Bosson: At the moment there is a statutory duty for partners to work together, but those partnerships do not have any legal responsibility themselves. At the moment they are working quite effectively in Wales. If we were to use that Community Safety Partnership perhaps as the BCU accountability arrangement then there would have to be more

formal legal responsibility given to that partnership and it would not be just a duty, they would have to work together in a better way. At the moment, for example, local authorities are very heavily involved, and quite rightly so, in terms of perhaps purchasing assets, etcetera. There always has to be a lead authority rather than the partnership being able to purchase and develop things itself. We think that that is something that perhaps ought to be looked at, to strengthen that BCU level and also the Police Authorities' involvement in that.

Q64 Mark Williams: In your written submission you mention that you are waiting for a satisfactory response from the Government around issues of governance, local accountability, human resources and finance (including start-up costs, transitional cost and precept equalization), and that you are expecting that response in time for the APA Chair's Summit tomorrow, December 7. Have you received that response yet from Government and, if you have, are you satisfied?

Mr Price-Thomas: No. This is again part of the very tight timetable that we are up against, not only ourselves but Government as well, in driving this agenda forward. You are quite right to say that this request emanated from a meeting we had with Hazel Blears when she attended the Association Police Authority conference a fortnight ago in Belfast and the APA made it quite clear that we were prepared to carry on with the exercise but that there were a number of caveats/critical issues that you have just raised that we needed answers to. We did mention that there was this prearranged summit of chairs and clerks of Police Authorities tomorrow and we asked her at that time in Belfast to come back by tomorrow with some constructive responses to our fundamental concerns as to the process and as to a number of issues that you have highlighted there. We have not had an indication yet as to what that response might be, but we look to tomorrow with anticipation.

Q65 Mark Williams: I think you have covered my next question in terms of the principles behind the model for regional policing that you have worked on and you have sent us. Do you have any indication of whether that model has got support from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Chief Constables and other stakeholders in Wales?

Mr Price-Thomas: Yes. In terms of the Home Office, there was a letter that came out of their Central Support Team, which is led by Chief Constable John Giffard and it was made quite clear at that time that they were somewhat sceptical about any suggestion of a reorganisation of police structures in a regional context, be it in the nine regions of England or within the Welsh national dimension. They frowned upon any suggestion of additional levels of bureaucracy. I think we have got quite an exercise to undertake to persuade them but we are minded to do so. In terms of the Welsh Assembly Government, they have backed that suggestion and so has the Welsh Local Government Association who themselves have done

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quite a lot of work recently on developing regional dimensions in a Welsh context. As Police Authorities we feel there is an opportunity at this point in time, in the development of the policing service, to get involved in that particular dimension. I know there is support from the Welsh Assembly Government for it and from the WLGA and this will involve further discussions. In terms of other stakeholders, I do not know. As we have indicated, we still have a considerable amount of consultative work to undertake in the weeks to come and we want to get on with it. We are 75 days today into a 95-day process which will take us up to Christmas Eve. It has been fast and there has been a rush without doubt but, having said that, we have carried out a degree of consultation across Wales to date. Certainly in my view there is a far greater amount of consultation still needed to be done so that we have the views of the Welsh public on what are fundamental changes to the policing service.

Q66 Mr David Jones: Is it realistically possible to complete that consultation process within the timescale?

Mr Price-Thomas: Not within the time given. We are required to present our final papers by the end of December. Although I have no firm knowledge about a response to this meeting tomorrow, I think there is going to be a certain degree of flexibility coming into it because the 43 Police Authorities of England and Wales have come together and they have made a strong case to Government to the effect that this is not possible within the timescales set. If you go back to the previous major reform of policing in the Sixties, we had a Royal Commission in 1959 that reported in 1962 and we had the Police Act of 1964; that is a five-year time-frame. Given my response to your initial question, Chairman, about the need to address this Level 2 gap and the fact that there is a gap in terms of protective service delivery as far as the police services in England and Wales are concerned, we do need to get on with it. But we certainly need more than 95 days to do a fundamental job which is going to take policing forward for the next 40 or 50 years.

Q67 Mr David Jones: Returning to the issue of governance, in your report you indicate that the reduction in the number of members of a strategic Police Authority for Wales could cause difficulties. It was suggested by the Assembly that this might be addressed by appointing 22 members from each of the unitary authorities. Do you feel that this would go any way at all towards addressing that sort of concern?

Mr Price-Thomas: I think perhaps my colleagues might care to express a view on that. I can see the difficulty Government is under because as of now the largest Police Authority in the country is the Metropolitan Police Authority, which has 23 members. I do not think there is a constraint in law in terms of the number of members a Police Authority can have as long as you have an odd number of members. Having said that, the strong

hints coming out of Government and from the Home Office are that, whatever regional Police Authority is set up, even if it is a strategic Police Authority, you are not going to have more than 23 members. There are difficulties given the present make up of Police Authorities even though the majority of members of Police Authorities are local councillors. In Gwent, for example, there are three lay justices and five independent members. That is where our 43 comes from in terms of the model we have put forward: there are 22 unitary authorities, we have 21 others and that equals 43. I suspect, given the indications coming out of Government, if it is a Welsh strategic authority we are not going to have that number and that is where we are going to have to negotiate and evaluate and put our case forward as best we can.

Cllr Thomas: Speaking on behalf of the local authorities and as a representative from the local authority, I think what we would like in Wales are representatives from each local authority involved in that accountability issue. Whether or not we can address that through the regional committees remains to be seen. Certainly as far as localization is concerned, we would want to have a voice on that strategic committee or authority.

Q68 Mr David Jones: Do you perceive the issue of remoteness as being a significant problem?

Cllr Thomas: It is certainly in parts of Wales but not in the south. Each community is different within Wales. We do feel that, as far as local authorities are concerned, we need a voice in relation to working in a coterminous way and working with our Community Safety Partnerships, etcetera and the local Police Force.

Cllr Evans: On the issue of public consultation, there have been three meetings in different parts of Dyfed Powys, they were reasonably attended and this was an issue which was put to the people present and it was a majority that said they must be represented locally on this authority, they wanted a say. They are asking for our support on major incidents and major matters and here we are having already limited participation in public consultation. This is a very valid point and we want to make sure that, if we can, this is carried out properly.

Q69 Mr Martyn Jones: Let us turn to finance now. What are the initial set-up costs and projected operational costs likely to be if we are still considering the three options?

Ms Wilding: There are a number of costs in terms of initial set-up costs, there are also some transitional costs as we move forward and there are additional ongoing costs. If we look first of all in terms of set-up costs, that exercise has been done for the three options we are looking at and obviously the lower set-up costs are assuming that there is not a change in structure but there is a gearing up in terms of Level 2 and the highest set-up costs associated with the one Force. In the work that the project team have done for the Home Office they were set very clear parameters about what should be included in the

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exercise. I think it might be useful if I just outline those areas before we look at costs. Obviously closing the Level 2 gap was a major area to be included in this and the assumptions that have been made for that are according to the Home Office models and what Dennis O'Conner set out in his report. There is also the underlying assumption that neighbourhood policing will be delivered, as has been stated already this year, so that is an area where there are additional costs. We have some additional grant coming towards PCSO over the next two years and that will go into a general grant. We have two areas where there are additional costs that will be incurred certainly in the short term and in the period that we have been looking at to review. The third area will be the initial costs associated with the restructuring and the savings that come out of that. One of the assumptions that the figures will have to be submitted on is that all of the costs will be incurred in year one, that is in the 2007-08 financial year and all savings will accrue from that date also. That is an assumption that we as Police Authorities, with our responsibilities to our ratepayers, are not happy about because all the experience of reorganisations is that the savings are normally over-estimated and take a little while to come along and certainly I think it would be optimistic for those to be in three years. Having said all of that and with those caveats in terms of the assumptions, the set-up costs are highest in respect of the all Wales option. In terms of additional ongoing costs, the most financially effective model is the one for the all Wales Force, but even that, on the basis we have been asked to cost, would result in additional costs on an annual basis of over £50 million and that is nearly 10% of our current budget. So the concerns that we have as Police Authorities are that if there is no new money for that and if the figures are going to be worse than that in the early years because those savings are not going to occur then that would put a tremendous pressure on our ratepayers and I would suggest if it was to fall just on the ratepayers then it would not happen because the figures are large there. The £51 million for the additional ongoing costs I think is the most important figure to look at here. If it was the two Force option, that is the combination of north Wales and Dyfed Powys on the one hand and south Wales and Gwent on the other, the ongoing additional costs would be nearly £60 million per annum, and in respect of gearing up on the model that we have been given for our four existing Forces the ongoing additional costs would be £69 million per annum.

Q70 Mr Martyn Jones: Do you agree with the National Assembly report which said that the set-up costs should be funded by the Home Office directly?
Ms Wilding: That would obviously be very useful.

Q71 Mr Martyn Jones: I thought you might!
Ms Wilding: One of the frustrations we have found as we have consulted on the information that we have at the moment is that when we go out people say "What will be the effect on our council tax?" and

we have to say we have not got the information as to what the additional funding, whether they be set-up or ongoing, are likely to be and they are concerned about that and they are concerned that if the money does not come in from there they are going to lose it from Level 1 and from neighbourhood policing. Certainly in the meetings in Dyfed Powys this was a real concern, they felt that there would be that drain of resources and that the Police Authority were not in a position to give them any assurances. In respect of the information that we hope we will make progress on with the Home Office tomorrow as far as finance is concerned and the governance, only with clear information there would we be able to go back and have a meaningful consultation with our ratepayers.

Q72 Mr Martyn Jones: I have been asking a lot of hypothetical questions today because the whole thing is hypothetical in my opinion. What we have seen with an all Wales health situation, through the Assembly, which obviously I support, is that there has been a tendency for a north to south drift of finance because there are huge problems in conurbations of south Wales. We have high crime levels in the south-east and low crime levels in the west and the north on the whole. My worry is that there might be a drift of finance towards the south-west. Have you any views on that either individually or collectively?

Cllr Roberts: We do have our concerns within north Wales about funding and we feel we should be listened to. Obviously if there is no funding then it is going to come out of the council tax or reserves or whatever, in the end it is going to come from your precepts and the money that is already in the system and if that money is not already in the system then it has got to drift from somewhere. I cannot see it drifting from anywhere else other than local BCUs or local areas one way or another. We know the demand is there in the south and we have got to provide for it. Any Chief Constable worth his salt is going to be able to do that. We will be losing that. Where is it going to come from? It has to come from neighbourhood policing and neighbourhood policing is what we are doing best in north Wales.

Q73 Chairman: In your submission to us, paragraph 30, you say that you have been involved in public consultation in November and early December. Could you tell us some of the outcomes of that consultation?

Mr Price-Thomas: Perhaps we could give an individual flavour from each police area.

Cllr Thomas: Certainly in south Wales we have held two major meetings, one in Cardiff and one in Swansea within the timescales and this is the problem that we are up against. There were mixed feelings in the Swansea committee in that there was a mixed bunch of views in relation to questions on the two Forces or one Force option. Certainly the situation in Cardiff was that they should stay where they are. The result from Cardiff was that we should remain as a South Wales Police Authority and

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Force. Other than that, we have not had time to go and consult widely within the south Wales patch as a whole so far rather than to look at the two major cities that we have got within the area. They were not very well attended meetings either and that is a problem, the fact that we are not getting the time to go out and consult with our communities.

Cllr Evans: We have had consultation in three areas, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire and we have a meeting on the twelfth in Llandrindod for Powys. There was not a large attendance, it was only 29 or 30 people on average and the consensus was that the *status quo* was the best, the majority of people wanted to remain as they were. When they were asked questions on the representation they said they would expect to have members from each of the BCU areas speak on behalf of the local project. All in all they were anti a national Force.

Cllr Roberts: We began by writing out letters early on in the period to local authorities and we had responses from all of the local authorities in north Wales and they gave us their support in keeping the *status quo*. In fact, this is not keeping the *status quo*, it is adding an element to the *status quo* to provide for Level 2 policing, so there is a slight difference here. In the last week we have arranged meetings with representatives of community councils right across north Wales. The first meeting took place last night. I think 40 community councils were represented. They came up with the *status quo* and full backing of the Police Authority and the stance that we are taking on this. Others are going on tonight and tomorrow and we should have fairly good representations from the community councils after that.

Mr Price-Thomas: So far as Gwent is concerned, Chairman, there is a general concern that this is a done deal; that is the concern that is coming through whichever mode of consultation we have employed. On 9 November we were written to by the Home Office indicating that in a Welsh context, in terms of the three options we put forward at the end of October, there was only one option so far as the Home Office is concerned and similar statements made, with due respect, by the Secretary of State have not been helpful in the context of the consultation. I know he has pulled back to an extent and said all the options are there, but statements have been made. There is a general concern that there is a done deal here and I think Government need to reassure the public that their views are valued and will be taken account of as the consultations proceed. So far as our consultation is concerned, we have had questionnaires, we have used the web and there has been a vociferous campaign by the local paper in order to protect the local Force and at the moment we can do no wrong! Based on the questionnaires, it is not a big trawl, 39% favour the existing four Forces, 37% favour two Forces for Wales and 23% favour one. 48% of the audience considered larger Forces a good idea; 52% did not. 85% felt all 22 unitary authorities should be involved in the new strategic Police Authority,

which is interesting. Then through the clerk we organised a series of workshops with our stakeholders on 14 November. At that 44% did not support restructuring, 56% did; 29% favoured one Force for Wales and 71% supported two Forces.

Q74 Chairman: I hear your comments about the Secretary of State for Wales. Given that the Secretary of State for Wales is the voice of Wales in Whitehall, have you actually involved him in the process of consultation?

Mr Price-Thomas: He has been au fait in terms of the paperwork we have put forward. As I indicated earlier, we have a meeting with Mr Hain this afternoon where we will be discussing where we are as of now with him and I hope we will have the opportunity of raising one or two issues.

Q75 Mr David Jones: Mr Price-Thomas, you used the expression twice "a done deal". A deal is normally a process that is undertaken by two or more parties. It seems to me it would be fairer to suggest on your analysis that what is happening is that you and the other Police Authorities are being bounced into an all Wales Police Force. Would you think that was an unfair suggestion?

Mr Price-Thomas: I would not disagree with you on that point.

Q76 Hywel Williams: Mr Price-Thomas, your colleagues said that the response to the consultation had not been huge. What was it like in Gwent?

Mr Price-Thomas: In terms of the questionnaires and the use of the web, we were somewhere around about the 100 mark and in terms of the two meetings that the Police Authority organised in the middle of November, these were key players from partnerships, we were about the 100 mark there again.

Q77 Hywel Williams: So the local campaign by the newspaper has not really caught the public's imagination as yet. Would you say that that is just a matter of time rather than some particular difficulty in getting people excited and interested in policing matters?

Mr Price-Thomas: I suspect, even though we will consult further, we will have more involvement, but to the degree that we would wish a public participation, I am not looking for huge numbers of people involved.

Cllr Roberts: We have had 40 representatives from community councils across one particular area and I think that is a fairly good representation from a wide area, that was covering Anglesey and Gwynedd. I think that is pretty good if we have got that. I received that information by phone this morning.

Q78 Hywel Williams: I want to move on to the Welsh dimension and devolution. In paragraph 37 you note Wales' distinctive position and the different political environments. Do you think the Home Office has recognised this distinction in the context of these proposals?

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Mr Price-Thomas: To date I have no evidence of that, sir.

Q79 Hywel Williams: You state in paragraph 38 that Wales is a nation and not a region, and that this fact affects the way the national criteria may need to be applied in Wales. Can you give any specific example of a difference in the way that the criteria could be applied in Wales?

Ms Bosson: I think it is the size of the authority and the geography. I know that in the toolkit that came out from the Home Office there were some additional weightings that were given to identity and to geography. I think those are the sort of issues we are talking about from a Wales dimension. There is the fact that it is 150 or 160 miles in length whereas in England, where you might be looking at a strategic authority, something like the West Midlands, it is 36 miles across. Those issues have not been taken into account or sparsity in large parts of Wales. I think as Police Authorities we do not feel that that has been taken into account. Although there was a little amount of weighting in terms of the scoring, it was not a lot, I think it was two points or something.

Cllr Roberts: John Giffard was quite limited in his replies. When he was talking about strategic Forces in two particular areas he actually said that because of geography and logistics it would not be appropriate to have a strategic Force in that particular area. That happened in the North-West and also in the West Midlands and I have notes on them in my briefcase and I would like to present them to you to have a look at. If you are going to do that with two Forces then you should do it across the board. It was not done on a level playing field at all.

Ms Wilding: I think there is a way in which national criteria may need to be applied differently to Wales as far as funding is concerned. The formula for the Police grant funding reflects density and sparsity. At the moment as we stand Dyfed Powys are here in terms of sparsity, with north Wales next in terms of being perhaps just on the sparsity side, then Gwent in terms of identity further along and then south Wales at the other extreme. If we were to be funded as one national Force for Wales we would be by far the most sparsely populated Force. We would stand the risk of losing out massively on funding if a new formula was not looked at to address that because all Wales would be considered to be a sparsely populated Force and there would be implications and we would want and need some reassurance in terms of what may happen in the medium term. I can see that in the short term there would just be a grouping together of our initial formulas, but that would have to evolve and there would be a real fear that if that was not addressed then there could be a very significant losing out of funding for an all Wales Force.

Q80 Hywel Williams: You may have heard me ask the Chief Constables earlier about the reorganisation not prejudicing any future transfer of responsibility to the National Assembly. Do you agree that it would not prejudice a transfer?

Mr Price-Thomas: So far as that particular issue is concerned, Chairman, as Police Authorities we have not addressed it either individually or as the Police Authority for Wales. We are anxious to engage in that particular debate through the relationships we have with the Welsh Local Government Association who you are probably aware in their recent manifesto has highlighted this as an issue that does need a firm discussion of and we would be very, very mindful and very glad to be part of that debate.

Q81 Chairman: I want to end with two questions about the way ahead. In the event of the Home Office recommending one Police Authority for Wales, would that mean that the Police Authorities would actually ask for a voluntary merger?

Mr Price-Thomas: Chairman, we are not at that stage. We are still awaiting this critical meeting tomorrow with the Home Office and we hope that we will have some reassurance there. I am personally doubtful we are going to get it at this stage. In terms of voluntary amalgamations, we are not anywhere near that particular stage. Certainly in terms of Gwent, I am having another full Police Authority meeting to discuss this on the nineteenth of this month. In Gwent we are not likely to be able to come to that view at this stage.

Cllr Roberts: North Wales has already made a decision not to go down the voluntary route.

Cllr Evans: I can say on behalf of Dyfed Powys that the 19 members accept totally what the professionals say in relation to Level 2, *et cetera*, but we are concerned, because we are a very rural Force, that it will be at the expense of resources being moved from very rural areas to the more urban areas and at the expense of local policing and the BCU.

Cllr Thomas: South Wales has not made that decision yet. They will be meeting again on the nineteenth. I do not see at this moment in time that we will get a voluntary agreement.

Q82 Chairman: I want to end by asking the same question of you which we asked of the Chief Constables. At the risk of asking you to repeat yourselves, what are your personal views about one Police Force for Wales?

Cllr Thomas: My personal view—and this is my personal view because I have to chair the Police Authority meeting on the nineteenth—is that, having led the smallest authority in Wales for 11.5 years and having led South Wales Police Authority for the last six years, I see the advantages being on a bigger structure. There are advantages on the other side, but certainly on the larger structure I do see advantages. I have no problems that exist within the small authority. I believe that an all Wales structure can work. I feel that an all Wales structure is the way forward.

Cllr Evans: My experience of the service over 40 years is that bigger is not always better. We have had

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a proud record in Dyfed Powys, but if it means that our present professional officers say we have got to go down the one Force route in the interests of efficiency then I would have to concede that might be the way forward providing we get a lot of assurances in relation to finance and local policing and neighbourhood policing.

Cllr Roberts: I believe that Richard Brunstrom and his team have given us in north Wales one of the best neighbourhood policing areas in the whole of the country. We are all benefiting from it at the moment. I have my concerns that we will not have that in place in another two or three years' time.

Mr Price-Thomas: I am not prepared to say at this stage, Chairman. There are so many ifs and buts and there could be political developments in terms of this timetable. I have yet to complete the consultation process in Gwent. There is still a long way to go. I will leave it at that if I may, sir.

Chairman: May I thank you all on behalf of the Committee for your evidence this morning and also for the written evidence that you have submitted. In the light of some critical meetings that you are about to have perhaps you may wish to give us further written evidence, however brief, and we would appreciate that if you so desire. Thank you very much.

Letter to the Home Secretary from Wales Police Forces and Police Authorities of Wales

POLICE SERVICE STRUCTURES IN WALES

As you will be aware, the four Police Authorities and Chief Constables in Wales have been jointly undertaking the review you established in September. Although we have made significant progress together, none of the Police Authorities are likely to be able to indicate a preferred option by the end of this year. Many of the reasons have been articulated by the APA and we do not intend to repeat them. However, we feel that there are some issues which are particularly or specifically relevant to Wales and we would welcome a meeting with you to see if we could make progress.

These points revolve around Wales' unique position in the review; we are a nation rather than a region and have geographical, infrastructure and cultural issues which any future structure must take account of. Any proposed change must, for instance, recognise that there is an emerging view that public services need to be organised on a regional (within Wales) as well as national and local basis. Hence, you will see that we have consulted particularly closely with the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association.

The specific areas we would like to discuss with you are:

GOVERNANCE

There are two issues here. Firstly, restricting the size of Police Authorities to 23 members in a country where there are currently 22 Unitary Authorities, all having representation on their existing Police Authorities, creates a democratic deficit which cannot be overcome by reference to a greater role for local authorities at BCU level. Secondly, the country is developing a regional structure because it is recognised that the lack of a fast transport infrastructure and the spread out nature of our communities demands a pragmatic approach to issues which are genuinely regional. This is not about unnecessary bureaucracy.

COMMAND

The issues of geography, topography and culture have heavily influenced the police professional view about command structures when looking at anything other than retaining four forces. Chief Officers do have to command incidents from time to time and for this reason, and others, a substantial form of regional command structure is unavoidable. This is already the case in Ireland, where similar factors apply.

FINANCE

You will have noted from our November submission that there are significant costs associated with providing both neighbourhood and protective services policing to the standard you require in Wales. To an extent, this is due again to the particular make up of the country. The lack of good north-south transport links and the existence of mountain ranges heavily influence the financial projections.

We hope you will see that we have approached the review in a positive way and the fact that we are writing to you collectively is an indication of our desire to see if we can make progress for the good of all the communities in Wales.

19 December 2005

Tuesday 17 January 2006

Members present:

Dr Hywel Francis, in the Chair

Mr Stephen Crabb
Mrs Siân C James
Mr Martyn Jones

Jessica Morden
Hywel Williams

Witness: Rt Hon Hazel Blears, a Member of the House, Minister for Policing, Security and Community Safety, Home Office, gave evidence.

Q83 Chairman: Welcome to the Welsh Affairs Committee. Minister, could you begin by formally introducing yourself for the record.

Hazel Blears: My name is Hazel Blears. I am Minister for Policing, Community Safety and Counter-terrorism.

Q84 Chairman: Thank you. Could I begin by referring you to the evidence you gave to our predecessor Committee. You said then that you were not interested in “huge structural change for its own sake”. Can you briefly outline the case that merits this huge structural change that you are now proposing?

Hazel Blears: I can certainly confirm that I still adopt the view that I am not in favour of huge structural change for its own sake. I think the important issue there, Chairman, is “for its own sake”. I have never believed in simply redrawing the map of policing in England or, indeed, in Wales but this current proposal to move to larger more Strategic Forces is actually based on a careful analysis by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary about the undoubted gap there is in the provision of Level 2 protected services to the people that we are there to serve. For me this structural change is not for its own sake. It has got a very clear purpose indeed, and that is to make sure that we can cope with the new threats and challenges that face us from serious and organised crime, from counter-terrorism and from major incidents; but at the same time—and this is my personal passion I have to say—be able to sustain in the long-term the kind of neighbourhood policing that all of our constituents want to see happen and, indeed, on which there is some very good practice in Wales. By moving to larger more Strategic Forces I genuinely believe that will give us the capacity and resilience to be able to sustain that neighbourhood policing in the long-term and in a very different way than has happened in the past.

Q85 Chairman: You are anticipating some of our questions. Is it your view that the case for change is universally applicable across the whole of Wales and England?

Hazel Blears: I think the analysis that Dennis O'Connor carried out in his report actually does relate to policing right across England and Wales. I think there are some common threads around our capacity to respond. If you look at the scoring that the Inspectors adopted when they carried out their assessment of protective services, I think that does

have universal application. They looked at three things. They looked at, first of all, the capacity of Forces to deal with intelligence, capture intelligence, and then to be able to act upon it in accordance with the National Intelligence model. They looked at Forces' ability to react to events that happened; but, crucially for me, they looked also at Forces' ability to be proactive, to scan the horizon, if you like, to think about where the next threats and challenges were going to come from; and they measured each Force on those three issues in terms of their capacity and capability to do that. I think it is fair to say that in all but the two largest Forces in England and Wales the scores were significantly adrift from where they ought to be if we were actually to be able to genuinely say to people that the provision of protective services is up to the kind of standard that they ought to be able to expect. I think that does have implications right across the country. It is true to say as well that some of the smaller Forces actually did perform better than might have been the case looking purely at their size; but none of those Forces were really up to the standard that people ought to be able to expect across England and Wales.

Q86 Chairman: There has been some concern about the pace of consultation. What discussions have you had with Police Authorities, Forces, elected representatives and officials in Wales that have informed your decision that a single all-Wales Strategic Force is the best way forward for us in Wales?

Hazel Blears: I have had extensive discussions with the Association of Police Authorities on a number of occasions since we embarked on this process in October last year. I entirely recognise that the timescale that has been set for consultation, for submission of business cases is tight. There are some good reasons for that. I think once you have decided that it is necessary to embark on change I think there is an imperative to get on with that process. I have seen very clearly for myself that when you have change that drags on then that can lead to the sapping of morale; it can lead to uncertainty; it can lead to almost a planning blight in organisations. There is an imperative to get on. I entirely acknowledge that it has been a very, very quick process and that created some difficulties in some quarters. I have met the APA; I have met Members of Parliament from across Wales I think on at least three or four occasions to listen to their genuine

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points. I also met the Chief Constables and Chairs of Police Authorities on 20 December. Those were the three Chief Constables in person with the Chief Constable for North Wales on a video conference at the same time—so he was a bit virtual in terms of our discussion, but nevertheless a very active participant. I have also spoken with Edwina Hart at the Welsh Assembly Government about these issues as well. There has been extensive dialogue around all of this. I would not for one moment pretend there is a complete meeting of minds, and people still have some very real concerns, but that is not for want of having proper channels of communication.

Q87 Mr Crabb: In your answer to the Chairman's first question you described a number of theoretical benefits forming the case for the proposed changes. How do you know those will be worth the cost involved of restructuring? What work have you and your Department done in analysing costs against benefits?

Hazel Blears: First of all to say that I think the *Closing the Gap* report from the Inspectorate is a good detailed piece of analysis. It was done over a period of months. It started with an interim report looking at services in a range of Authorities, and then went on to look at all Forces. It has been not a lengthy process but I think certainly a rigorous process to analyse the gaps in our capacity and our ability to respond. I think there has also been an analysis around the changing crime patterns that there are. I think in the report the Inspectors talk about serious and organised crime being a real and significant threat and almost a vibrant and growing area of concern. Clearly, if you like, the gaps have been pretty well established and analysed. If I am honest about it, whenever I talk to Chief Constables, and indeed people in Authorities as well, I think there is a genuine recognition that we have not got the capacity to be able to respond in the way that we would want to. This has been there for a long time. Even if you go back as far as the early 1990s there were proposals then from the then Conservative Government that maybe the 43 Force structure was not the ideal way of delivering Police Services; but unfortunately at that time there was not a will to go forward. I think the gap has been around for a long, long time. In terms of the costs and benefits, we asked people to submit their different cases by 23 December. I am pleased to say that the overwhelming majority of Forces and Authorities have done exactly that. We are now in the process of going through those business cases literally line by line, with a really rigorous financial assessment. We commissioned CIPFA as an independent and I think very well acknowledged body of accountancy, and probably finance, to help us with that work. We recognise that Forces do not always have the capacity to be able to do that, and we have put a great strain of their capacity, I know that, by asking them to do this. Over the next few weeks we will be going through each of those business cases in detail to make sure that the costs and benefits make this process worthwhile. I have said time and again not only do I not believe in structural change for its own

sake but that I want these decisions to be based on how do we get the most effective policing. I do believe there will be savings in the medium to long-term; that we can then reinvest to fill that gap in protective services; but we have got to make sure that it works and the cases absolutely stack up and that is exactly what we are doing.

Q88 Mr Jones: In a debate in the Commons on 19 December the Home Secretary more than suggested, he restated, that the idea of a UK National Police Force was not on—he rejected it; however, you are proposing a national Police Force in Wales. Is this not an inconsistency in policy?

Hazel Blears: No, I do not think it is. The Home Secretary said, and it is a view I share, that if we had simply a national Police Force it would be quite difficult for the Minister for Police to have a distance from the operational policing decisions; and there would be this danger of blurring the political role with the very important operational independence that there is for policing in this country. I think that is a value we all hold very dear. In terms of the Welsh Police Force, again policing is not a devolved matter so you are not creating a national Police Force in Wales in a way that is directly dictated to by politicians in that way: but I entirely acknowledge that there are some differences in relation to the Welsh situation because it is covering a whole nation. Therefore, we have said that we want to look at flexibility around some of the governance issues, which I know are of pressing concern in Wales, recognising not just that this is in a very wide area but there are also issues around geography, around crime patterns that are different in Wales. That is why we are perfectly willing to discuss some flexibility around those issues.

Q89 Mr Jones: It is encouraging to hear you say that, Minister, but there is bound to be pressure in the long-term, maybe in the medium-term, for the Welsh Assembly to take over—more devolution in terms of the Home Office functions regarding an all-Welsh Police Force. That then harks back to the objections that the Home Secretary has for a UK-wide Police Force—this probability of political governance of an all-Wales Police Force. Can you see that that is a danger?

Hazel Blears: I can see that that is a proper issue to raise but what I would say to you is that I think you are in danger, with great respect, of possibly crossing more hurdles than are there at the moment.

Q90 Mr Jones: But may be there in the future.

Hazel Blears: I am very clear that there are no plans to devolve policing to the Welsh Assembly; that we will continue to have England and Wales policing for a number of very good reasons in terms of the Criminal Justice System, the way in which policing works and relationships that are necessary there; but that does not rule out extremely good cooperation, particularly with the Community Safety Partnerships that operate in Wales; and we envisage much closer working across the rest of England

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between the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and with local government, recognising that much of the work that the Police do is not done on their own but is actually done in partnership with a range of other agencies. The fact that it is not devolved does not mean that that collaboration and cooperation and multi-agency partnership working with devolved parts of the system cannot actually be very effective.

Q91 Hywel Williams: Can I ask you a practical question. If you left Cardiff on your motorcycle on the fastest road north, in about five hours you would come to Holyhead, which would be within the new Welsh Police Force. If you left London on the very best road, in five hours you would get to Lancaster. You are not proposing a Regional Police Force which would cover both London and Lancaster; why are you suggesting a Police Force which would cover Cardiff and Holyhead?

Hazel Blears: I think for a number of reasons. I entirely accept that the geography is difficult in Wales, not just for distance but also the division in terms of North and South Wales and also the transport infrastructure. Presuming that I was riding my motor cycle within the speed limit, which of course I always do, indeed those travelling distances are very great, but they are not unique. If you look at the south-west of England, from Devon and Cornwall to Bristol, I think in some cases it takes less time to get to central London than it does to reach parts of that region. We do have similar difficulties in other parts of the country. I do think there are some good reasons for looking at an all-Wales Police Force. Again, we have said we want to look at this, and that is because you have to have some unit of organisation around your Police Services. If you can bring your Forces together then one of the main drivers, for example, is around major incidents, triple murders and those kinds of things which happens, and you would then be able to have dedicated teams of staff who are not just together on a permanent basis, but are actually developing expertise and specialisms in dealing with some of those complex matters. There have been some arguments raised that perhaps North Wales would be better suited to be in collaboration, or in a merged structure, with Cheshire Police Force, or indeed with Merseyside because those are some of the crime patterns. I have had some good discussions with members about those issues. The proposals that are being put forward, and are supported I think by the Chief Constable, are that they do believe that an all-Wales Police Force could function in a proper way, could provide better services and could help to fill this gap around serious and organised crimes that we have got. We do want a good solution and you have got to draw the boundary somewhere, and clearly it is a matter of debate as to the appropriate space for that boundary.

Q92 Hywel Williams: Could I just pick you up on one small detail on something you said earlier. You said the third factor was these prospective abilities—the abilities to foresee patterns in the future. I was

intrigued by your statement that it was not necessarily a consequence of size, that there were some small Police Forces who seem to be rather good at doing this as well as some large Police Forces. In practice in your experience there is no reason *per se* why, say, Dyfed-Powys Police or North Wales Police should not be able to perform this third function as well as, say, an all-Wales Police Force?

Hazel Blears: Not to say you have misconstrued what I said but I think I need to be very clear about what I said. In the Inspectors' report there was a clear correlation between size and the ability to provide protective services, both using intelligence, proactive and reactive, and there was a clear correlation. That is why the Inspectors initially recommended a Force of at least 4,700 officers and then scaled that back to 4,000. There were some Forces who were smaller than that which did perform reasonably well but not up to the standard that was expected; but in the majority of cases the larger Forces had more capacity to do that job on all those fronts. I would have significant concerns about the small Forces being able to cope in the future. What we see is that serious and organised crime, people trafficking, money laundering and drugs, is actually growing; and the pressures, if anything, in 10 or 15 years' time are going to be greater to take away your neighbourhood officers to deal with some of that serious and organised crime. For example, less than 6% of over 1,500 big organised crime gangs are being targeted by Police in any one year. It is tiny proportion of the large organised crime network there is out there that we are able to target. Only 13 out of 43 Forces have got specialised murder incident teams that are able to be there long-term. These are very practical issues. If you have only got a small Force, then either you have got to call for mutual aid from outside, which does happen, but that is a very temporary solution. What we are looking for here is a long-term solution for the next 15, 20 or 25 years.

Q93 Mr Jones: I would not dispute what you have just said in terms of a large Force creating the ability to deal with that kind of situation. The problem in Wales is that a large Force would be south of Brecon, because that is the nature of the Police Forces in Wales. You are going to create essentially the kind of Force you want to deal with those problems south of Brecon. You are going to have 6,000 officers south of Brecon and 1,500–2,000 north of Brecon. The cross-border issues in North Wales, as you have acknowledged, are different and 200 miles away from where you are creating the extra officers and the expertise that can deal with it. An all-Wales Police Force is not going to tackle Level 2 problems in North Wales on the basis that you have just described.

Hazel Blears: First of all let me just say that I do not accept the presumption that an all-Wales Police Force has to be completely concentrated in the south of Wales.

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Q94 Mr Jones: It just is though, Minister, at the moment. Are you going to say you can move 1,500 policemen or policewomen across South Wales to North Wales?

Hazel Blears: No. What I would say to you is that it is the responsibility of the new Force, if and when it comes into existence, for them to look at the whole of their business. Where I have said this is not about redrawing the map and simply bringing three or four Forces together and saying, "Carry on as you have been doing—you're just a larger organisation", there is little point to that because you have not increased your capacity and your resilience. What you have got to do is look at every bit of your business and reconfigure that so you are able to fill that gap. What are we doing on roads policing at the moment? Have we got enough automatic number plate recognition? What are we doing in relation to firearms training? How many of our officers are trained to do firearms? One of the problems in a small Force is quite often you are asking officers to fulfil several different specialisms. They could be a firearms officer; they could also have responsibility for counter-terrorism issues; they could have some other responsibility. You could almost have an officer who is at a road traffic incident who then gets called away to deal with something else that happens. What I am saying to Forces, and it is not just in Wales but right across the country, is that this is the chance for you to look at the whole of the way you do your business; what are the threats you have got; what are the processes you need in place? That may mean significant different configuration from where you are at the moment. It is not simply a matter of coming together. You might decide in relation to your murder incident teams that you need a capacity in this place, and that will be an operational decision for that Force to take. One of things I do think is important in relation to North Wales, and this has been impressed on me, is whether or not we could have some specific command responsibility within the command team of a new Force with some geographical responsibility for that area; which again might be another part of the jigsaw which would be able to reassure people that the needs of that community are not going to be neglected. My challenge is to any of these Forces not simply to come together and carry on as you have been doing; you have got to look at how you get significant extra value out of the fact that you are now a larger organisation and you do not need four headquarters necessarily; you do not need four press offices; you do not need four lots of payroll; you do not need four lots of administrative staff. That should release resources to reinvest in some of these other important areas.

Q95 Mr Crabb: The Chairman of the Police Authorities expressed a desire to seize the opportunity presented by the publication of the *Closing the Gap* report to look at a comprehensive restructuring of Police. Was this ever realistically achievable in the 95-day consultation period which you set out?

Hazel Blears: I think the process is actually in several parts. Initially we asked people to submit both cost and benefit business cases by 23 December. We also asked them to submit implementation plans. After discussion with the Association of Police Authorities I was very struck by the extent of the task that we were requiring people to do in a relatively short timescale. What I decided at that point was that we wanted the businesses cases but the implementation cases we could take some further time to work on. I do think if we are to get the most out of this process it is not simply about coming together—it is a much more in-depth analysis. As we have said, we have got the initial submissions in and some are more detailed than others in terms of how much they have been able to do already about defining the kind of service level that they want to provide to the community and what the outputs might look like and how they would be able to define success. Some are detailed; some are less detailed. We are going to have to work on that as we go through. This process does not end with the submission of the cases on 23 December. I want to see more work done around this very reconfiguration point about what are the issues that are facing you; how do you design your business; and what kind of skills are you going to need in this new world. Almost the bringing together of new strategic forces ought to provide us with some more momentum towards changing our skill mix—making sure we have got the right people in the right place, with the right skills and competences. This is part of the wider police reform programme that we are currently undertaking.

Q96 Mr Crabb: The Chair of the Police Authorities also told us that this "lunatic timescale" risked not doing the job properly. Do you agree with that?

Hazel Blears: No, I would not accept at all that this is a lunatic timescale. I think I have acknowledged that it is a tight timescale; that we have asked people to work extremely hard on these issues; and I think the vast majority of Forces and Authorities have done just that. They have dedicated resources. The best people have actually set up regional teams where they have been able to share information and they have collaborated pretty well with each other, and I am grateful to them for doing that. I think the Police Service clearly has a huge investment in making this process work, making it practical and making it succeed. I was prepared to say, "Let's look at the implementation cases later", so there was some flexibility on the part of Government.

Q97 Mrs James: Just to build on your response, when the Police Authorities of Wales gave evidence here to the Committee on 6 December one of the things of concern was the lack of information coming from the Government to help them make decisions—specifically refunding and funding packages that might possibly be available and governance issues. You have already touched on governance issues, and of course in Wales we have particular challenges etc. They were telling us they were still to be addressed at that point two weeks before the final deadline of 23 December.

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Subsequently I have spoken to Authority members in my constituency and they are still awaiting that information. Why do you think that has happened, and what is your response to that?

Hazel Blears: I think the issues that were raised in Wales were the same issues that were raised across the country, and they were around funding for initial set-up costs; they were about governance; and they were also about precept levels which people had concerns about, particularly where precepts varied between different Authorities. I would not pretend for a moment that we have complete and total answers to all and every question that will be raised, because these are very complex matters; but in terms of funding for initial set-up costs we have to get the initial business cases so that we can then analyse them and see exactly what are the true costs: which are initial costs; which costs which come later; when do the benefits start to emerge; and what is the timescale over which we will make economies of scale that we can plough back in? That is quite a complex process that we have to go through. That is exactly what we are engaged on now with our consultants, working with the Forces and the Authorities, giving them some extra capacity to be able to analyse all of those details. We have said we think there will be some initial set-up costs, particularly for those people who volunteered to go early, because they will be the pathfinders, if you like, and they will be smoothing the way, hopefully, for other people who come along later. In that respect we have said we can provide £50 million this year from Government for capital costs and £75 million next year to be able to help with that process. We have to drill down to see exactly what the costs are. Some of the figures that have been floated, I think I said in Home Office questions yesterday, I do not entirely accept that they are completely accurate; and I am sure as we go through this iteration and examination we will get down to a more accurate picture there. The funding issues we are considering in some detail. I think it would have been unrealistic and not appropriate simply to try and deal with all that before we got the business cases in, because that would have been doing it without the knowledge of the detail that has been worked on. The second issue you have raised around governance I think is hugely important, because if you move to larger more strategic Forces then at local level people want to know that their neighbourhood policing will still be in place; and they want to know how they can have a say over what those local priorities should be. As long ago as two and a half years, when we did the *White Paper Building Communities, Beating Crime*, I said that there would need to be stronger accountability at BCU level and at the neighbourhood level if people were to really feel that sense of ownership. In the Welsh perspective I think there are some issues around being flexible, about the size of the Strategic Police Authority; and we have already said that we will consider whether we can accommodate somebody from every local authority to be able to have a say; at recognising again that this is different from other places. We have also said that we want to make sure at BCU

level, this is right across the country, that there is a way in particular district councils, the Community Safety Partnerships and CDRPs can have more of a role in holding BCU commanders to account, and making sure those priorities are delivered. At neighbourhood level we want the very small community at ward level to be able to have a say about what it is their neighbourhood team is actually going to do. We have talked about having a regional command responsibility in Wales, again if that is something people want to do. At every level we want to make sure that that governance is there, and people are able to have a proper input into priorities. The final issue that you have raised around precepts—we have now got a tripartite working group from the APA, from ACPO, from the Home Office, working with the Treasury and ODPM, because clearly we want to make sure that the precept issues are addressed, but they are quite complex. I think in North Wales' case, there would actually be a significant reduction in precept if there was to be an equalisation. Clearly, other people would be going in the opposite direction.

Q98 Mrs James: I am glad to hear that. Certainly the Police Authorities were particularly critical of the Government, and particularly critical of the handling of the process. They were also concerned about what they consider to be the unhelpful comments from both the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Wales. They have gained this impression that there was a *fait accompli*, and that this was a done deal in a way; that the thing needed to fall into line pretty quickly because there were no other options. Certainly they want to hear words like “flexibility” and “negotiation”. Do you acknowledge that the Government's handling of this process could have been improved and might have been a little more flexible?

Hazel Blears: I think this is quite a difficult issue in Government generally as well as in this particular case. If you simply say that all options are open for discussion then I think there is a danger that you mislead people, when in fact the evidence will broadly tend to lead you in a particular direction. I think there is a responsibility on Government to be as honest as it can about the evidence it has and what are the parameters within which there might be some flexibility, but without misleading people that basically all options are open. It brings me back to the point we made about the correlation between size and the ability of Forces to be able to deliver on protective services. I think the evidence was there from the report that a minimum size of 4,000 officers and 6,000 staff would lead to the best configuration possible. Therefore that evidence leads you towards some conclusion. Now how you present that in a way that says there is still room for discussion and still room for options to come forward but, at the same time, not lead people to be working up options that are not realistic—what we wanted to do was to give people a clear steer that these are the kinds of things we think are likely to happen as a result of the independent evidence we have had from the Inspectorate and, therefore, we want you to

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concentrate on getting the best case you can on this kind of territory. I certainly did not want to give the impression that every “t” was crossed and every “i” was dotted. I think I have said to you that around finance, around governance, around perfectly legitimate issues to raise then there is room for discussion. I do not know how Government really does get it right in trying to be as honest as we can about the likely areas we will look at and then not be accused of having made our mind up in the first place. I think I have said very clearly I want these decisions to be based on a proper evidence base, a rigorous analysis and that they are going to be sustainable for the next 20–25 years. They are big decisions these. If the impression was given that we have simply made up our minds then that was not the case. Maybe that is an unfortunate position for us to arrive at. I hope there is a sense that there is a real discussion and engagement going on.

Q99 Mr Crabb: Minister, you mentioned that the overwhelming majority of Police Authorities got back to you before 23 December deadline and signed up to the Government’s proposals. I understood it was a minority of Authorities that had responded positively. Could you just clear that up and tell me how many Police Authorities got back to you by the deadline and how many Welsh Police Authorities?

Hazel Blears: What I said was that vast majority of people had submitted their business cases, which is what we asked them to do, by December 23. I certainly have not said that everybody “signed up to the Government’s proposals”, because this is an ongoing process of negotiation and analysis. There are clearly some Forces and Authorities that are clearer about the future than others, and some Forces and Authorities that have agreed on a way forward. For example, I think in the West Midlands we have got three Forces who definitely want to go forward, and other Forces who do not. Similarly, I think there is a degree of consensus among two Forces in the north-east, and there is some progress in the north-west, so this is different in different places. I think I said to you that in the south-west, for example, that is quite a difficult region to look at because of the geography in similar ways to Wales. I think we have had submissions certainly from all the four Welsh Police Forces. In terms of the Authorities, I have not seen their specific cases, I think there are only three Forces, to my knowledge, of three Authorities where we have not had submissions out of the 43 that have come forward. I think we are making extremely good progress.

Q100 Mr Crabb: Earlier you talked about having some flexibility with regard to implementation. Does that mean that your timetable is now slipping for making decisions on progress? Can you step up perhaps what sort of milestones there now are and when you might expect to make a final decision?

Hazel Blears: No, I do not think the timetable is slipping. I think what we want to do is make sure we get this right. This is about long-term change for the future and I do not think we want to be driven by artificial deadlines; but at the same time getting a

careful balance, keeping momentum and a sense of going forward, are important. We said that we would work throughout January on the business cases, and then we would consider the matter further, which is exactly what we will do. If the cases stack up and the costs and benefits provide a good robust case, then if people want to volunteer to go forward it is open to the Secretary of State to make those Orders. They could go through their parliamentary process. We then would want to appoint the Shadow Police Authorities, because I am very concerned that Police Authorities, if you like the democratic representatives, should have a real input on recruiting the new command teams. You would have to then get your Shadow Police Authorities up and running and that would take several months; and then you would have to be recruiting your new command teams for the new Forces. This is clearly a process that will take us probably through the rest of this year. If people are not able to come to a consensus about the way forward and it is necessary in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Police Service, which I think is the phrase used in the legislation, for the Home Secretary to make the Orders there is then a statutory period of four months consultation. Clearly in those cases the timescale may be different from those cases where people have reached a consensus and want to go forward. We may well see different timescales for different ways forward. What we would like to do, if we can, is to be able to establish some of the new Forces by April 2007. If the process goes on longer than that then so be it. I am quite concerned that with any change process in that period we want to hang on to our really, really good staff and give them a sense that in the new organisation they have a really important role to play, so morale and staff motivation is important.

Q101 Mr Crabb: Conceivably we could see some restructuring from April 2007 stretching into 2008, and maybe some laggard Authorities in other parts of the country in 2009?

Hazel Blears: We could see everybody deciding that this is the agreed way forward and everybody completing the whole of their restructuring in 2007. Let us see what happens as this develops.

Q102 Mr Crabb: In the scenario you have described, conceivably there is quite a long period of uncertainty, upheaval and change prospectively for Police Authorities in England and Wales?

Hazel Blears: No, I do not think there is upheaval and uncertainty; there is certainly a period of change. I think most Police Authorities and Forces recognise that that is the right thing to do, because the costs of not having change are significant. The costs of having counter-terrorism incidents for which we are ill-prepared would be pretty devastating. The costs of being able to tackle more than 6% of these 1,500 serious crime gangs will have a significant impact, and I think we have to look at it in that way. There are significant costs of simply adopting the status quo, so there will be change. I do not accept that there will be uncertainty, and I hope

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that there will not be. I hope that people will agree on a way forward and we will do everything we can to facilitate that.

Q103 Mr Crabb: The APA in early December issued a statement saying that “the APA does not accept that HMIC’s Report *Closing the Gap* provides a complete or comprehensive business case for the creation of Strategic Forces and . . . the APA will urgently explore alternative models, such as a federated approach to establish if these offer a quicker, more cost effective approach to improve protective policing services”. Is the Government still willing to consider alternative approaches, such as the federated approach (as proposed by the APA), or do you intend to press on with the strategic option and ignore the opinion of the APA?

Hazel Blears: We never ignore the opinion of the APA; sometimes we do not share the opinion, but we never ignore the opinions of the people who represent communities because that is very important for us. When we originally embarked on this process we indicated there were some criteria that we wanted to shape where we wanted to go to. One of those criteria was the recommendation from HMIC that the Strategic Force was the best business case option; but we did not rule out collaboration or federation. We said that if people could provide a compelling case for other models then we would certainly look at them. We said the same thing about not crossing Government Office boundaries. We said that our presumption, a very strong presumption, was that we wanted to do it within Government Office boundaries because the other relationships, particularly around crime reduction, Prison Service and the Criminal Justice System, were very important. We said if people could provide a compelling case that some of the models would work better then we would look at that. It is the same that we tried to do in relation to the options; we tried to give a strong steer but without ruling out those other issues. In terms of collaboration and federation, HMIC said in their report that in their view these models would not provide us with the significant extra capacity that we wanted because, in their experience when it had been tried in the past, it did not work because there was no sense of ownership of that collaboration. Because it did not belong in one organisation there was an unwillingness to fund some of the collaborations at a proper level; so basically everybody adopted the lowest common denominator; to some extent, “What can we get away with in terms of funding this, because it is not our Service so we don’t feel the ownership of it?” In terms of collaboration as well, there was a sense that it could create additional lines of bureaucracy and accountability—where is the reporting line—without necessarily delivering you that extra capacity that you wanted to see happen. There were a number of examples where it had been tried where, if we are honest about it, it really had not worked. The evidence out there was, although it sounded very good, in principle as a long-term solution it was not going to deliver the step-change that we wanted to see happen. That is not to say that collaboration

should not happen as well as the adoption of the new Strategic Forces—because in the North Wales case particularly collaboration is going to have to continue around criminal markets. If you look at South Wales, it has been said to me time and again that the relationships with Avon and Somerset in terms of crime markets with Bristol are clearly there. I think what we probably want to get to is Strategic Forces plus collaboration; but if somebody can come up with a scheme that jumps off the page and says, “Through collaboration and federation we can achieve . . . fill in this gap”, then of course we would not rule that out.

Q104 Jessica Morden: You have touched on this a bit already but could you explain what consultation you and your Office have had with Welsh Forces, Police Authorities, public and elected AMs and MPs both before 23 December and after?

Hazel Blears: We have had a fairly extensive dialogue with Members of Parliament on a number of occasions. I think the Home Secretary has also been to perhaps one meeting of the MPs; I have certainly been to several; and there have been discussions with the Chiefs and the Chairs of the Authorities, which I had last year. In terms of consultation with the community, we made it very clear at the outset in October last year that this was properly the responsibility of the Police Authorities, and that is as it should be. The Police Authorities are the people who are in touch with communities; they are accountable to communities for the performance of their Police Forces; and I think they also have some statutory duties around consultation and involving local people. Many of those Authorities have actually done some very good work. Some of them have set up citizens’ juries; some of them have done opinion polling; they have had focus groups; they have had leaflets and done some quite extensive consultation around it. Primarily that was a job for the local level rather than central Government going over the heads of the Police Authorities into those communities.

Q105 Jessica Morden: But it is very difficult though for Authorities to have any meaningful public consultation within such a short timescale?

Hazel Blears: Three months, and that is the normal period for consultation when you develop plans. I accept that it has been a tight timescale; but what we have also said is that the 23 December was not the deadline for that kind of consultation, and those discussions should continue to go on in communities as we analyse the business cases and as we take this forward. I think communities in my experience are particularly concerned about how can they have their say at BCU level and at neighbourhood level. I think that consultation is hugely important, particularly as we work up some of the Government’s model around the Welsh situation, as to whether or not we do need commanders who have got geographical responsibility. What should be the role of the Strategic Authority? How does that then

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relate to the Community Safety Partnership? It is those local issues that I do think people are interested in.

Q106 Jessica Morden: Chief Constable Grange when he came to this Committee also said that although he felt presented with the deadline that he did not really feel consulted. Why do you think he felt like that?

Hazel Blears: I am sorry of he felt like that. I have met him and had good discussion and I think all the Chiefs and the Authorities have actually been very constructive in working on the cases that we have asked them to put forward. They genuinely have devoted a huge amount of time and effort to making this work. I personally am really grateful to them for doing that because the very reason we ask Forces to come forward with this information is because they are the experts in that field about what can be done. I would hope he would have a sense of being involved, of leading this process together with his colleagues, rather than simply having this decision made by Government. Government could have sat in the Home Office and had a blueprint in the drawer and said, "This is the map for new Forces", but we did not do that. We actually said, "You come forward to us with the options that you think are going to work". I realise in the Welsh case there was the preferred option around the all-Wales Force; but equally within that we want to test, "Is it actually going to be effective and work?" I am sorry if he feels not as involved as he might do; and maybe I will have to redouble my efforts to make sure we have as much dialogue as we can.

Q107 Hywel Williams: At some points you seem to say that it is up to them to come up with plans which meet the challenge; and at other points you have said that "the challenge is for them to reconfigure their businesses". To what extent is there freedom for Police Authorities and Police Forces in Wales and elsewhere to present their plans as they see fit. You have just said there was no blueprint in the drawer in the Home Office. I am not quite clear as to what extent the blueprint was out, if there was one in the first place. You seem to say several things at the same time.

Hazel Blears: I am sorry if I am not providing you with sufficient clarity but I think the business of Government and public services is quite complex and very often it is a balance of those two issues—for Government to set a broad strategic framework and then within that for the people who have to deliver on the ground to provide us with the detail, the analysis, and the way in which the business ought to be configured in order to deliver. That is complicated in policing by the fact that there is a proper statutory division, if you like, between the Home Office, the Chief Constables and the Police Authorities, and there is a proper tripartite relationship which maintains operational independence of the Police Services. It is a very different relationship than, for example, you might have in the NHS, which is much more a direct relationship between Government and deliverer.

You have actually got a third partner here properly, because you do not want ministers directing operational decisions—I do not think we do anyway, so inevitably there will be a balance. I think the job of Government is to set that strategic framework, and that is why we came up with the criteria that we did; which said that ordinarily, on the advice we have got from the Inspectorate, we want to see larger, more Strategic Forces to have that capacity; we do not want to cross Government Office boundaries; and we do not at first sight see collaboration or federation being able to deliver that for us, but we remain to be convinced. So we set those criteria; but within those criteria we said to Forces, "You get together in your regions and see what the good options are, the preferred options, for us to be able to take forward". I think that is quite a good balance really. On the one hand, you have not got Government dictating the detail of an operational plan, which I do not think you should have; but, equally, you have got Government giving some guidance about what the broad parameters are in which we want you to operate.

Q108 Hywel Williams: Can we look at one aspect of that tripartite model. There are 22 local authorities, county councils, Unitary Authorities in Wales, and my understanding is that there would be 23 members of the Strategic Police Authority. You referred earlier on that you would be prepared to look at this. How would that pan out? Could you say a little bit more about that, perhaps in the Welsh context or even elsewhere?

Hazel Blears: With the plans for the Strategic Police Authorities we want to try and make sure they are big enough to give people representation, but not too large so that you have a huge body that is not able to make decisions; and I think most bits of public governance need to try and fulfil that criterion. In most places we are saying that the maximum number should be 23; that is the current position in relation to the Metropolitan Police, which I suppose is our first Strategic Police Force in many ways, and that is the way they have been operating and that seems to work well. We have said that a majority should be councillors because they will be precepting Authorities, and it is right that the democratic element should be the largest element. In Wales I think you have got some specific issues about the fact that this is an all-Wales Police Force and there is a real desire for all parts of the country to be able to have representation on that Police Authority. What we have said at the moment is that we will be flexible around this. I cannot tell you now exactly how many people there might be on your Strategic Welsh Police Authority, but I want to try and see if we can reach agreements with those local government partners around giving sufficient representation there. We have also proposed that in the legislation that we bring forward we would not have (as we have at the moment) a separate magistrates' category for any Strategic Police Authorities. Magistrates would be very welcome to be on Police Authorities as independent members and could provide a very good link to the rest of the

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criminal justice system; but that would give us a bit more flexibility for our independent members to make sure that we get a good range of skills and talents within the independent members as well. All I can say is we will be flexible. If we can then we want to try and accommodate the very genuine wish for Welsh Authorities to have some representation on Strategic Police Authorities. The Home Secretary said yesterday we would look at this very positively.

Q109 Hywel Williams: In passing, the comment I would make is that perhaps we have too many small Authorities rather than too small a potential Strategic Police Authority. You have tantalised us a little bit about the possibilities of arrangements specifically for North Wales. I think you referred to that a number of times in answer to the questions. How do you envisage the genuine regional issues in Wales being reflected in respect of governance and accountability?

Hazel Blears: First of all, to say that I am not really attracted to having an extra level of statutory accountability at regional level, because there is a danger that you have too much structure in here which ends up with people attending meetings rather than necessarily doing their job. It is a balance between having effective accountability and not having too much bureaucracy around it. We have the Strategic Police Authority; then we have accountability and mechanisms at BCU level, which is what most people relate to; and then we have something much more informal but at neighbourhood policing level where local people can have a say; and then at the regional level what I have said I am happy to explore is whether or not you have an Assistant Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable or somebody with significant authority with some regional responsibility for delivery in that area. It might be that the Strategic Police Authorities want to set up something that is non-statutory at regional level, and that might be the case; but I personally am not attracted to having a whole series of regional boards as well as a Strategic Police Authority, as well as something at BCU level and then something at neighbourhood level as well, because I think that is probably too much in that landscape. It might be that they want to have something non-statutory, where they bring people together on an informal basis to try and make sure that those regional issues are addressed and that would be a perfectly proper thing for them to do. I am not in favour of having, if you like, another body that might to some extent want to second-guess what goes on in those other parts of the system.

Q110 Hywel Williams: Just to finish with a very broad question: Wales has a unique political set-up, devolved structures and particular aspects of language and culture, for example where I represent. Could you formally for the record tell us how all this has informed your thinking about the structure of Police governance in Wales and give us some points?

Hazel Blears: Talking about the specific characteristics of Wales and how that might influence some of the decisions we have made, first

of all, I am very conscious of the geography; and that is a physical thing in a way. The other things that have been in my mind specifically in relation to Wales are around neighbourhood policing, first of all. One of my first experiences of good neighbourhood policing was when I went out to North Wales and I will say this about the Chief Constable: he has had the commitment second to none in terms of neighbourhood policing and its work. In many communities that had previously felt completely neglected the introduction of neighbourhood policing teams has increased confidence in those communities enormously. What the Chief Constable talked to me about a couple of years ago now was the importance of having police officers in the same place for a considerable period of time so that they had a chance to build relationships with local people and with young people in terms of tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and drug dealing. He was innovative and brought in something which was akin to a contract; that members of the Police Force committed to working an area for two or three years and, as a result of that, they would then get on in their careers. I think he helped to make neighbourhood policing an attractive career for a police officer and has changed the culture. Therefore, I think it is fair to say that in Wales this idea of building relationships with local people has been a specific issue for me. That is why I genuinely think that moving towards Strategic Forces will help us to sustain that relationship in the long-term. I would not be doing this if I felt it was moving towards more remote relationships. It has to happen. It is not peculiarly Welsh, but it is a very strong element of the Welsh system, of having a relationship. If you look at South Wales, I have been out to South Wales and sometimes the geography is very difficult in rural areas, in valleys with scattered communities and sparse communities. If you have got a Community Support Officer who is known by that very small community then the amount of trust and confidence builds enormously. We have also got some experience around the anti-social behaviour agenda. We have got several together action areas that are in Wales now, in Swansea, Cardiff and, I think, Newport and again we have learned. Some of the issues about tackling the night-time economy, particularly in Swansea and Cardiff, have informed a lot of our policy thinking at the centre and the way in which we have worked in partnership with the Health Service around tackling those issues. There is a lot that Wales has to help to guide and shape our policy-making. Again I think the kind of innovation (almost because of the difficulties that you face) that you have had to do can help to inform this next stage as well. Because you are far-flung and it is very often difficult in terms of communications, people have had to find new ways of working. I hope we can build on that relationship. I do also think I understand the concerns that there are, that resources might be taken off from neighbourhood policing as it currently happens into other areas; and I think we have got to do some more work about how we provide almost a guarantee to local communities that they will continue to have a quality and

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standard of service within the new organisations. I am putting my mind to that now because I understand people's very natural wish for that kind of reassurance out there. I have thought about Wales, and I have been influenced by the visits I have done and the discussions I have had and there is a lot we can learn.

Q111 Mrs James: You mentioned Chief Constable Brunstrom who actually expressed to this Committee many similar points that you have raised there and his concern that neighbourhood policing, which has been particularly successful in Wales, (and I must say in my community in Swansea East the commitment of the South Wales Police to neighbourhood policing and identifying those areas that need additional support and help has been fantastic) was being ignored within this debate; he felt that it was very interesting to debate this but neighbourhood policing was not being built into the overall discussion?

Hazel Blears: If that is the case then I am very, very concerned about that because at every opportunity I make the case that this is not just about level 2 services, it is about protecting neighbourhood policing. I think that brings us back in a way to the reconfiguration argument. If you are looking in a new organisation for every bit of your business you should also be looking about how you embed neighbourhood policing into what you do. The work that Matt Baggot has been leading on on neighbourhood policing is actually a much more complex piece of work than simply adding on community police officers. In the past, when we have talked about community policing, in some cases it has been just perhaps an extra team or an extra community police officer on top of your existing organisation. So you have not changed your response, you have not changed your investigation, you have not changed the way you do volume crime; you just sometimes put a very nice person on the top and expected them to build relationships. The whole idea of neighbourhood policing is that you change that quite dramatically and you look at getting the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills, and your neighbourhood police officers are just as much expected to detect and solve crime as they are to build relationships; they are not just about reassurance, they are about tackling criminals. So neighbourhood policing has to be a different way of providing our mainstream police service. So this reconfiguration that new organisations have to go through is not simply about looking at serious and organised crime but making sure that they embed for the long term the neighbourhood policing that is working very well. Two extra things to add: we will have 24,000 CSOs over the next couple of years, so there will be extra bodies funded significantly from, I think, £465 million altogether from government over the next couple of years as well as contributions from local authorities and council tax payers. Also we have that neighbourhood policing in one BCU in every force at the moment—more in some places that are a bit more advanced—but we hope to have it over half the

country by the end of next year and everywhere by the end of 2008. I think that will be a significant change in the way that we do policing in this country and I am absolutely determined that this process will enhance it and not detract from it.

Q112 Mrs James: You have actually gone into the second part of my question but I just want to have the reassurance from you that sufficient funds will be available to guarantee the continuity of this high quality neighbourhood policing alongside the provision of protective services, whilst recognising the unique geographic and demographic challenges that we face in Wales. So it is good news to hear that there will be money but obviously we will need additional funding to ensure that we maintain those services.

Hazel Blears: I can certainly give you the commitment that our plans to roll out neighbourhood policing in every community across the country—rural, urban, inner city, market town—are fundamental; it is a manifesto commitment, it will happen, it is funded with significant amounts of extra investment to make sure that that does place. But one of the purposes of coming together in larger, more strategic organisations is to release some funds to reinvest in the protective services challenge that we have. Obviously it will take some little time for some of those savings to come through, but we certainly anticipate that by bringing shared services together—payroll, procurement, administrative services and, as I say, reconfiguring your business—then there will be savings to be had, and that is why we analysing the business cases at the moment. We want to reinvest those savings—they are not going back to the Treasury—in better policing, and that is the challenge for us. But the neighbourhood policing is our guarantee.

Q113 Mr Crabb: Minister, you talk about these savings in the medium to long term. Could you be a little more specific as to what we are talking about here? Tens of millions of pounds being saved in Wales from 2010 onwards? Do you have any sense of the order of magnitude of the potential savings and when those are likely to be realised?

Hazel Blears: I cannot give you the detail on that because that analysis is ongoing at the moment. Some people have said that there will be no savings for 10 years and I do not accept that. Again, in most mergers and amalgamations that have taken place in the private sector then they would expect to realise business benefits within two to three years. That might be a little optimistic, and I am prepared to say that; but, equally, I think the worse case scenario is not where we will be either, so it will probably be somewhere in the middle of that. In terms of the amount of savings that can be made, that is partly dependent on existing investment plans, how those might be reprioritised and how fast they might be able to get to shared services. Some people have collaborations already. I know that in the eastern part of the country, in East Anglia, there is a fairly well established collaboration mechanism of shared

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services, so they might be able to realise some benefits perhaps earlier than others who do not have that. So we are still in that process of working that through. I want it to be as realistic an assessment as it can be; I do not want it to be rose tinted glasses because that is not going to serve any of us well. But neither do I want it to be the doom and gloom scenario that it is going to cost us hundreds of millions of pounds and we will never get any benefits out of it; I am a bit more optimistic than that.

Q114 Mr Jones: You hinted earlier, Minister, that there was a possibility of some kind of regional command structure, particularly in North Wales. It is the case that often major incidents require a senior officer, the chief in the case of the present 43 services. They do have to command incidents and at the moment what you are hinting is probably impossible because there are not any suitable ranks. You did suggest an assistant or deputy, if I heard you correctly, and that would mean, for 24-hour coverage in North Wales, three local top cops, should we say. What rank would you be envisaging that these people would be and would you be looking at three to give the proper 24-hour cover?

Hazel Blears: First of all, to say that the decisions about the shape of the command team will really be a matter for the new force rather than for me to dictate from the Centre, but these discussions are ongoing because I recognise the particular regional issues that there are. At the moment if we want to have an additional deputy I think the position is that we need to legislate for that because current legislation limits us to one Deputy Chief Constable, so that would be a matter that we would need to take forward and we are perfectly open to those discussions. In terms of serious incidents there is a well-established procedure for having Gold Commanders of incidents and very often that will be Chief Superintendents as well as members of the command team, and I am sure that happens now when there are incidents that take place. What is important is that people have sufficient experience, training and skills to be able to carry out that role properly. We do a whole series of exercises, whether it is around disasters or indeed counter terrorism, which give people those skills to be able to do it. So I do not think that is necessarily a problem. What I would say is that if we get to larger, more strategic forces I think the role of the BCU commander is probably going to be even more responsible and complex than it is now. BCU commanders are already people who are leaders in their community, or should be, responsible for many of the decisions about local allocation of resources, about how they do their neighbourhood policing. What we want to do in the legislation is to put basic command units on a statutory basis, which they are not at the moment, and to try to make sure that there is proper empowerment of those BCU commanders to be able to play a really significant role. That does not mean that they will not be accountable to the chief, clearly they will be, but I think all our experience is that where BCU commanders really do feel empowered

to make decisions then they can drive policing at that neighbourhood level and I think that is going to be increasingly important where you have larger forces.

Q115 Mr Jones: If we move on to funding, Minister. The Police Authorities in Wales expressed concern about the lack of information from government as to how the restructuring will be funded because that has an implication with how they set their council tax and how they explain to the public about that. Can this information be provided as a matter of urgency?

Hazel Blears: There are a number of issues here. One is that we have said we are going to set aside some extra capital money, £50 million this year, £75 million next year, for people who go early because they are the ones who are going to encounter the hurdles and hopefully will trail blaze a few issues for people who perhaps go a little later. So we want to try and make sure that that is in place. We have to look at the existing investment decisions that authorities have planned, and again in their business cases they might reprioritise some of those so that might reduce some of the initial costs that they have to take on board. I do not think we envisage a big bang, that everything will be done immediately, because there will be issues around IT, making sure that people have compatible systems that will need investment; there will be issues about how do you best utilise your custody facilities because those will be coming together. So you really have to look at what are your assets and then what are the demands on those assets and how do you get the best value out of that? So we say some are from funding, looking again at investment decisions, continuing to squeeze out efficiencies. Actually forces have done very well; we asked for 3% efficiencies last year and everybody met that, with 1.5% being cashable, and we have the same for this year, so the police forces have done very well on squeezing that out—and I think there is more they can do. Then we did raise the issue that there might be some opportunity for borrowing, and I do not rule that out entirely. I know people are very wary about that because borrowing has to be paid back and that comes out of the revenue funding, and that is why we have this group now set up involving the APA, ourselves and the chiefs working with the Treasury and ODPM around all of these funding issues. They are not simple to resolve, I entirely accept that, but we will have to work our way through them if this is the direction in which we are going to go, and we have to make sure that we have sufficient finance to support it.

Q116 Mr Jones: Being parochial again, Minister, you mentioned the council tax in North Wales being high, where the police precept is high, but it is accepted by the people of North Wales because the *quid pro quo* for that is that we get really good neighbourhood policing, which you acknowledge, and we have that because there are a lot more extra police officers because of the higher precept, if you understand. You tended to suggest that a reduction in council tax would be very popular in North Wales. I do not think it would be if that resulted in

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less police officers and a threat to neighbourhood policing, which I acknowledge that you want to protect. But of course the best neighbourhood policing levels are in North Wales and if our precept goes down how do we then fund and keep those neighbourhood police officers in place? It is a risk and one that I think we shouldn't be taking. Also, you might think about the fact that if we reduce the council tax in North Wales, the police precept, which in the North Wales police force would necessarily come down because you would have some rise in South Wales presumably—and I think you have mentioned on a previous occasion that this might be phased in—that could be seen in North Wales as the North Wales council tax payers paying for South Wales for a number of years whilst that phasing takes place, and that would be deeply unpopular, I can say. So I wondered if you had thought about these two issues?

Hazel Blears: On the first one, in terms of neighbourhood policing, I just make a couple of points. One is that we have given a manifesto commitment that every community will have their neighbourhood police teams. We also have a manifesto commitment for 24,000 community support officers, so rather than having fewer people in uniform patrolling your streets you are actually going to have more, and I think all forces have now bid for their allocations for the extra community support officers. So we are not in a period of shrinking resources, we are actually in a period of expansion, and I do think that makes it easier for us to be able to reassure people that they will continue to get their service. I think we probably need to do a little more work around what a neighbourhood guarantee looks like in terms of quality of service as well as numbers, because it is not simply the numbers of people we have, it is how fast they respond, how well they feed back to you, how much they have built a relationship with you and how much reassurance they are doing on the streets. So there is something around the quality of service as well as pure numbers that we need to do some more work on to give people reassurance that in their neighbourhood this is the kind of service that they can expect to depend on, and I am keen to do that. In terms of the precept, North Wales is £159, Dyfed £143, Gwent £145 and South Wales £120. So if you did come to a kind of equalisation to raise the same amount of money I think the joint precept would be about £138, taking into account population and things. What we have to think about is whether or not you have a kind of damping mechanism so that you do not have that jump all at once. But equally you raise a serious point about people not wanting to feel that they are subsidising others and what are they actually getting for their money, and I think those are the kind of things that we genuinely have to try and work through with the Finance Working Group to see if there are measures that we can put in place to reassure people. There has always been some equalisation, inevitably, not just in police services but also in all public services. People pay the same precept across an area and in one area you might have high crime so inevitably you get more

resources because very often a resource allocation is based on the amount of crime you have. So people have always accepted that if they live in a relatively low crime area then there will be some skewing of their resources, but what they will not accept is that they do not get anything, and that is why the neighbourhood policing guarantee is so important because irrespective of crime they will have a neighbourhood team. It might look very different in a very affluent place that does not have very much crime as opposed to an inner city that has huge drug problems, but they should still have a service and that is where we want to get to with people.

Q117 Mr Jones: I am sure that the people of North Wales would be happy to pay less and get the same service. Let us hope that is what happens. Finally, can you assure the Committee that should this go ahead the initial set up costs for the restructuring of the Constabulary in Wales will be met entirely by the UK Government?

Hazel Blears: I do not think I am in a position to give that undertaking. As I have said, we have set some monies aside. We will also look at investment decisions, efficiencies and the possibility of some borrowing. I think this has to be a joint and shared enterprise because at the end of the day the savings that will be achieved will be reinvested in policing—those are not going to come back to the government. So I think there is some responsibility on making some investment now to achieve the actual savings later on which will enhance the services.

Q118 Mr Jones: Will all those savings stay in Wales?

Hazel Blears: The business case that we have I hope will produce effective savings that can be reinvested in Welsh police services, to try and bridge the level 2 protective services gap.

Q119 Hywel Williams: You could characterise the joint precept as a Welsh National Police hypothecated police tax, could you not? You could say everybody in Wales pays this amount of money for the police and it is a hypothecated tax for the police and a national one that is for Wales. Locally it might be seen, as it is now, as a tax for your local policing. Are you comfortable with that potential conflict in people's perceptions because clearly the point that you made earlier on about paying a certain amount and getting at least some policing if not all the policing that you would want. Are there going to be problems in that respect?

Hazel Blears: The situation now is that the Police Authorities precept and sometimes it is perhaps not as transparent as the public would like it to be. We are trying to do something about that; we are saying that the police have to issue local policing summaries, which is something new, which is about performance but also about the resources and how well they are spent, how effective they are at spending their resources, and that is something that we said we would do in the White Paper, so that local communities have a way of seeing what is it that is being spent, what is it delivering, is it as good as my neighbours, are they effective as they should be? I am

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a great believer in information for the public, I think it helps drive up standards, I think it enhances accountability and I do not think things should be hidden from the public, they are the taxpayers and I think they are entitled to that information. As the Strategic Police Authorities will be the precepting organisation I think it will be quite important for us to see what are the formulae on which the funds come through to BCUs. Those will be different, I am sure, based on need and other factors, but I think it is quite important that there is transparency, for people to be able to see just exactly what it is that they are getting.

Q120 Hywel Williams: I quite accept that, it is just it will be much clearer now that this is a precept for all of Wales and these parities in policing might be perceived as being sharper than they would have been if they had been on the basis of North Wales or Dyfed-Powys, or whatever. That is just a comment.

Hazel Blears: I suppose one of the issues is how you define policing, is it not? Is policing the number of bodies that you have on your streets? It is partly that because people want that reassurance. But policing is also about reducing crime generally so that wherever you live in the country it is a safer place to be, and sometimes I think that policing becomes a very narrow definition, simply about the number of police officers there are. And I think policing is also about what you do, how effective you are at what you are doing, how you anticipate and prevent crime, and that is why the relationship between the police and the local authority is so key, because most people would rather not get burgled than that you catch the burglar; they want you to catch the burglar, of course they do, but they would far rather not get burgled. So actually if you are doing crime prevention work with your local authority, if you are doing youth work so that you can tackle some of the youngsters who get involved in antisocial behaviour then, again, people would far rather that happened than that necessarily you have to go down the ASBO route. So actually the definition of policing sometimes, I think, is in some people's minds very narrow and in fact the mission that we are asking the police to do now is incredibly wide and that is why I think the relationship between the police and the community safety partnerships and having some more transparency at that BCU level will be very important.

Q121 Hywel Williams: North Wales and Dyfed-Powys are rural and South Wales and Gwent are much more urban. Can I just read this quote from the Police Authorities of Wales: "If we were to be funded as one national force for Wales we would be by far the most sparsely populated force. We would stand the risk of losing out massively on funding if a new formula was not looked at and addressed." Can you reassure us that there will not be a reduction in the real term funding that comes to the police in Wales because of this restructuring?

Hazel Blears: I think inevitably, as we go forward with the mergers and we see new forces coming through then we will have to have a re-examination

of the formula. The reason that I took the decision to have a broadly flat rate increase for this coming year and the coming year after was basically to give us some stability whilst we get through this process, but we could end up with a very significantly different landscape than the one we have now. Therefore I do think that we will need, together with the APA and with the chiefs, to look at the formula to make sure that it does reflect people's genuine needs.

Q122 Jessica Morden: If not all the forces volunteered to merge and you end up in this situation where you have a four-month consultation period and have to make people merge, what would the form of the consultation be and would it include the public?

Hazel Blears: I have never been through the consultation so I do not think I could say what form it would be. From my own perspective it would be wide ranging, it would be detailed and it would be a genuine attempt to involve stakeholders and the public because those are the elements of any proper consultation and that is what should happen. One of the difficulties I think we do face is that when you ask people to change it is sometimes very difficult for people to get the information—and I do not say that in a patronising way, that they are not capable of understanding because of course they are, but there is always a tendency to cleave to what we know. I know that one of the opinion polls in one part of the country asked a question of people, "Do you want a larger force?" whose headquarters will be based in completely the opposite area of their community—and I am not specifying which one it was—and unsurprisingly 89% of the public said no. They would, would they not? So you can have a consultation, but we have to make sure that there is as much information available to people as possible when we go through that.

Q123 Jessica Morden: The final question. Do you think it is beneficial to the quality of policing in England and Wales to force a merger on professionals who have expressed serious and varied concerns about the merger?

Hazel Blears: I do not want to be in a position where we have to force people to do things that they are fundamentally opposed to doing. I think your best organisations work when people genuinely want to be part of something that they see would be an improvement for the public that they serve. I think it is part of our task, part of my task to try and make that case as clearly as I can so that we can try and take people with us. I am hugely encouraged so far that despite some of the publicity I think there is a genuine recognition on the part of forces that if they are going provide the services to their communities that they want to do, and make those places safer from serious and organised crime, from counter terrorism, from serious murders, to get roads policing right, to prepare for disasters, that is what the police want to do. If I not just myself can convince them but if we can get to a point where we are agreed that the best way to do that is to free up

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the capacity by coming together—it is a cooperative model of sharing your resources and sharing your talent and skills to provide a better service—then my experience is that for most people in the public service, policing or other services, it is what they want to do, and I hope that we can get to that point.

Q124 Hywel Williams: There has been some talk amongst very senior police officers in Wales of adopting the Welsh term for police for the Welsh police force, which is “heddlu”, which means literally the peace people, almost, which reflects the neighbourhood policing and all that of stuff. What is your response to that?

Hazel Blears: It is the first time I have heard it. I do see it on police officers’ uniforms in Wales and the police general motto is to serve their community and to preserve the peace, so it is exactly what they do and it is part of their mission to do that. As an English person I do not have a view on that, but if that is something that people want to put forward during the consultation no doubt that will be seriously considered.

Q125 Chairman: Minister, thank you very much for your comprehensive evidence before us and indeed your fluency as well despite the interruption.

Hazel Blears: Could I just make one point? You asked me earlier on whether all the forces and authorities had submitted cases and what was the position in Wales. I can just confirm for the Committee that there was one business case and a joint submission from Wales from the forces and the authorities, and in three forces, as I said; in Cumbria we have a submission from the force and a letter from the authority; in Cleveland we have a letter from the authority and no submission; and in the Metropolitan Police there is no submission, but that is as agreed with them because of their special circumstances. So I just wanted to make sure that I did not give the Committee any incorrect information.

Q126 Mr Crabb: Are you able to make available copies of those in the Commons Library?

Hazel Blears: At the moment I am not in a position to do that because they are subject to this detailed scrutiny and evaluation as we go through, and things I am sure will change almost from day to day.

Chairman: Thank you very much.