

**REVIEW OF REMUNERATION AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR POLICE
OFFICERS AND STAFF – AVON & SOMERSET POLICY AUTHORITY
CONSULTATION SUBMISSION
28/10/10**

Introduction

Avon & Somerset Police Authority is responsible for securing an efficient and effective police service in the Avon & Somerset area. As part of this role we oversee human resources issues for police officers and staff within the Avon & Somerset Constabulary.

We have structured our response to follow the main subject headings in the sample questions for the Call for Evidence – however we have not answered each detailed question as a number of the areas are more operationally based and are therefore more relevant to be answered by Avon & Somerset Constabulary. Whilst this is not a joint response we have been jointly discussing the issues with Avon and Somerset Constabulary.

General Principles

The following are the general principles which we would support as part of the review:-

- We feel the overall aim of the review should be to introduce terms and conditions for police officers and staff which provide in both cases for modern and relevant employment terms and for a flexible, operationally effective workforce;
- As far as possible, the terms and conditions for police officers and staff should be equivalent - increasingly police staff are involved in what could be considered front line roles such as in the communications area;
- As part of this alignment the ability to make police officers redundant should be provided where this is justified and in the best interest of delivery of policing to the public. Decisions on redundancy should be linked to performance and employment record and not based on length of service;
- We support the restrictions on police officers being able to carry out industrial action – we would support the extension of this to police staff particularly those in front line roles such as communication and detention officers and PCSO's.
- We support the rationalisation of the pay review bodies and the streamlining of these processes. Crucially, we feel the system for out of hours working and short notice working needs to be simplified and the balance between fairness between employee / officer and the public purse needs to be rebalanced.
- We support the interim conclusions of the Hutton review and fair and equitable measures in order to make police officer and staff pensions affordable for the public.
- We support a system which allows local discretion over areas such as chief officer pay and bonus schemes. The current mandatory scheme is not consistent with localised decision making.

Entry Routes

- Pre-entry qualification – we support exploring pre-entry requirements for police officers. We are concerned about potential diversity issues arising from this and we therefore feel it should be linked to community outreach and sponsorship schemes to ensure the progress in terms of diversity of recruitment continues.
- Multi-level entry – we support a study to explore the feasibility of multi-level entry for particular areas of work where this is in the best interest of the service in introducing specialist skills such as commercial / business management;
- Specials – we support investment and further utilisation of Special Police Officers – in our view there is scope for them to be used in more general front line roles rather than in specialist roles
- Subject to addressing the diversity issues above we would support a general requirement for police officer recruits to have a spell as a special officer.

Deployment

The regulations in relation to deployment of officers need to be modernised and the balance must be restructured between the rights of officers and flexibility of deployment and value for money. This does not mean that unreasonable demands should be put on officers however their deployment particularly on out of hours work needs to be made more flexible in a proportionate way.

Short Service Commissions

We would support the possibility of having shorter term contracts (eg 10 years) for police officers with a possibility to extend but with specific exit points and circumstances such as short term commissions into the armed forces. We believe this may lead to a more flexible and dynamic workforce.

Performance / Work Related Pay

We consider that the current system of automatically awarding increments to officers and staff is not justifiable. Whilst there are some existing protections within the system – these are not consistently applied in our experience. This area therefore needs review and true performance related increases appropriately and proactively managed need to be introduced.

Business Interests

The current system for business interests we believe is workable though the various rights to appeal could be simplified. We believe the arrangements should also apply to police staff.

Chief Officer Bonuses

In our view, the current chief officer bonus scheme should not be mandatory and should be subject to local decision making. A national framework which could be opted into by police authorities would be the best approach.

Length of Service

We believe there should be more flexibility for people to leave the service early (see above in relation to short service commissions) which would result in the creation of a more dynamic workforce.

Use of Consultants and Pensions

We believe the current system whereby police officers can retire on a full pension and then be rehired as police staff and receive additional pay for doing the same job should be revised. The current system for police staff (whereby if staff continue beyond 30 years the pension is netted off from their pay) is a perfectly appropriate system and should be applied across staff / officers which would be much easier if there were a consistent framework for terms and conditions.

Pay Machinery

We would support a national framework on pay but there should be an ability within that framework to recognise the different attractions of different roles and indeed of different locations. There should be an acknowledgement of some local flexibility and an ability to address market forces.

We do feel it would be sensible to look at simplifying rank and shift structure.

Incentivising Long Term Front Line Roles

We suggest any new / revised terms and conditions should incentivise police officers to remain in front line neighbourhood and response roles for longer periods – this could be addressed through some form of acknowledgement of the importance of such roles for example by the introduction of a Senior Police Constable grade. The current system encourages able officers to move up through the ranks and away from important front line roles when ongoing expertise in front line roles and familiarity with areas and communities is invaluable. A key issue should be to structure terms and conditions so that this type of approach is incentivised.

Performance Reviews

Generally performance review processes should be simplified throughout the police service and approaches which focus on key objectives and development which are appropriate to particular roles and stages in careers should be adopted.

Pensions

We support the interim conclusions of the Hutton review – public sector pensions should be looked at in totality and changes must be introduced which ensure that the pensions are affordable whilst still be fair to pensioners.