

Police Force Re-Structuring

‘A sixty second brief’

Why?

- The Home Office commissioned HMIC to explore whether the present police structure is sufficiently robust to handle the whole spectrum of protective services, whilst simultaneously tackling volume crime.
- HMIC published its findings in a report published on 16 September 2005. HMIC concluded that the “current 43 force structure is no longer fit for purpose” and that “in the interests of the efficiency and effectiveness of policing it should change.”
- The Home Secretary strongly agreed with HMIC’s conclusions and wrote to Chief Officers and Chairs of Police Authorities on 22 September to set out in some detail how he would like the process to be taken forward.

What?

- HMIC considers that forces with fewer than 4,000 officers or 6,000 staff simply do not have the critical mass to provide the necessary level of protective services.
- Only seven forces currently meet this threshold.
- HMIC considered a number of options for reform including increased collaboration between police forces, lead forces for each region, and the creation of strategic forces through mergers. It concluded that “the strategic forces offers the best business solution”.
- HMIC are clear that mergers on their own will not be sufficient. New forces will need to reconfigure the way protective services are provided in future in order to comply with minimum national standards.
- The protective services reviewed were: 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.

How?

- The Home Secretary stated that he has no blueprint for strategic forces. He has put the onus on forces and police authorities locally, in consultation with their officers and staff, other CJS and local government agencies, to discuss and come forward with their own firm proposals for options for change.
- Restructuring is not a cost saving exercise but is driven by the need to improve protective services. We anticipate that greater efficiency provided through economies of scale might free up resources to better strengthen the fight against organised and serious crime.

When?

- By the end of the year: Forces have been asked to evaluate options for restructuring and to submit their final report to the Home Office by 23 December

Impact

- **Improvement:** Proposals to restructure police forces will have to meet strict criteria for ensuring that they meet the need to improve protective services whilst maintaining the quality of service provided to individual neighbourhoods and address the particular problems that they face.
- **Minimal Disruption:** HMIC believes that any disruption to BCUs can be effectively minimised, while protective services are reshaped. This is because BCUs primarily deliver the vast bulk of everyday policing services and most are now sufficiently large and have secured co-terminosity, so that they can be left largely intact during a move towards restructuring.
- **Local Delivery:** Policing will continue to be delivered locally, responding to local concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour. The roll out of neighbourhood policing by 2008 will ensure that local communities will be served by local police officers and community support officers (CSOs) dedicated to their own communities. Indeed, the creation of strategic forces with sufficient capacity and resilience to deal with major investigations or public order incidents will help safeguard local policing by reducing the need to abstract officers from neighbourhood policing teams.
- **Tackling Crime:** Restructuring will also help forces combat the threat posed by criminals in the 21st century. Crime that takes place on our streets, on our estates and in our communities is often linked to wider regional and national networks. Neighbourhood policing will be uniquely positioned to tackle this at a local level by providing a close, two way relationship with local people, whilst strategic forces will be better equipped to counter the threat higher up the chain. We see the two as mutually supportive.