



Police Federation of England and Wales

SUSSEX POLICE JOINT BRANCH BOARD

Serving Sussex Police Officers

25 July 2011

Dear MP

We write to you on behalf of the 3000 officers we represent in Sussex and would ask for your support in our fight against the current multi-pronged attacks on our pay and conditions. Police officers cannot understand why we have been singled out within the public sector for this unprecedented assault on us. We are fully aware that public sector workers have to take their fair share of the pain as the country struggles to recover from financial meltdown but for us, the important word is "fair".

We accept that we, like all public sector workers, have to endure a 2 year pay freeze. We accept that public sector pensions should be reviewed (notwithstanding that ours was reviewed as recently as 2006 and we currently make the highest public sector contributions!). However, no other group of public sector workers are being subjected to the dismantling of their pay and conditions as advocated by the Winsor and Neyroud reports. The total policing bill for this country amounts to only 1% of the entire public sector budget yet no other group are under such a sustained attack. In a letter to our national Chairman Paul McKeever on the 12th July this year, the Home Secretary reaffirmed that the whole of the public sector should take their "fair share of the burden". Singling out the police service is hardly fair. At the national Police Federation conference in 2010, Theresa May pledged to support us. Her "support" has resulted in 98% of the 42,000 officers who responded to a recent national Federation survey, stating that morale has fallen owing to planned police budget cuts. If this is her idea of support then we can well do without it!

We are also concerned about the lack of evidence Winsor is able to draw upon to back up his recommendations. Frequently, when challenged by our national representatives, he is unable to produce any evidence in support of his report. Given that from the outset he claimed that his report would be evidence based, the lack of it would indicate to us that his assertions are fundamentally flawed. It is also of interest to us that he is due to attend the Chief Constable's Counsel this week, having declined to attend the Federation conference. It appears that he will talk to the Chiefs but not the indians!

The first 2 points from the Winsor report we will specifically address are the recommendations to abolish Competency Related Payments and to freeze incremental payments for 2 years. Both of these, if implemented will cost each and every officer we represent tens of thousands of pounds as they both form part of pensionable pay. The incremental pay freeze is especially harsh as it will hit the most financially vulnerable officers who are on the lower pay scales. They will have joined the police service with an expectation of incremental pay increases and will have made financial commitments based on this fact. To in effect "fine" them two increments, which cumulatively amount to over £4000 (not including the long term effect to their pension) is just unfair. Again, no other public sector workers are being subjected to an incremental freeze. Young in service officers already find that they are struggling financially due to the rapidly increasing cost of living and for many this will prove to be the final straw.



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It has also not gone un-noticed by our members that the plan to completely abolish the Competency Payment is rather at odds with the decision to merely suspend the Chief Officer's bonus scheme for 2 years.

We would also draw your attention to the Winsor proposals in relation to overtime rates. Currently, casual overtime is paid at a rate of time and a third, overtime on a rest day where between 5 and 15 days notice is given, is paid at a rate of time and a half and a rest day with less than 5 days notice is paid at double time. Any rest day working where more than 15 days notice is given is not financially recompensed at all. There are very good reasons why we are recompensed for overtime at the current rates, the main one being that overtime is not voluntary but is compulsory. Officers can and frequently are ordered to work on at the end of their shift, ordered to work their rest days and even have their annual leave cancelled. It does not matter that they may have family commitments or holiday booked because having been given a lawful order to work, they have to obey this regardless. We could understand and totally agree with a reduction in overtime rates providing officers are afforded the same luxury enjoyed by most other workers, namely the ability to say "no thank you, I am busy that day". However, this is simply not the case.

In addition, the fact that we are reasonably recompensed also serves as a punitive measure thereby ensuring that managers only pay overtime where it is reasonable and necessary. In Sussex we have had in place strict criteria for working overtime for the last few years and this has helped dramatically reduce the overtime budget. The frequently peddled mantra that police have an "overtime gravy train" is in Sussex, simply a myth. Overtime will always be necessary in the police service because when tragedy, adversity or public order situations arise, we cannot simply open a new box of police officers and the deployment has to come from the already existing "thin blue line".

As well as our obvious concerns of the effect on individual officers, we also have grave concerns about the potential effect to public safety, which we believe will be a knock on effect of the Winsor report. Speaking at the annual ACPO conference, Sir Hugh Orde, their President, finally found his way to the top of the parapet and was quoted as saying:

"Unless greater clarity emerges in the very near future I do fear we run the risk of compromising the safety of citizens and damaging a service which has been at the forefront of protecting the public for so many years".

He went on:

"Changes to accountability, changes to central structures and changes to pay and conditions, which if mismanaged could threaten the impartial model of policing that has existed for 180 years and is revered across the western world".

In addition to Sir Hugh's comments, we would also draw your attention to the recent Civitas report which stated:

"The data suggests an association between police officers per head of population and crimes per head. A nation with a larger proportion of police officers is somewhat more likely to have a lower crime rate"



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The Chief Constable in Sussex, Martin Richards, has pledged to maintain the "frontline", but we agree with Sir Hugh and Civitas and would therefore assert that frontline services cannot remain as resilient as they currently are and that the public will be the ones to suffer. Over a relatively short period, we will be losing 500 police officers and 550 police staff in Sussex and we fail to see how this can be achieved without adversely affecting service delivery and crime prevention.

If the Winsor recommendations were not bad enough news for the police service, we also have to contend with the Neyroud report which talks about setting up a professional body of policing requiring police officers to have to pay to practice their profession. We would question the need for such a body which would be the first in policing anywhere in the world. The body would set about regulating the police service which we feel is wholly unnecessary given that through, amongst other things, regulations, public scrutiny, the IPCC et al, we are already the most closely scrutinised and accountable of the public services.

It is interesting that Neyroud is proposing this body when the Education Secretary Michael Gove has announced plans to abolish the General Teaching Council, the professional body for teaching in England saying that in relation to the GTC:

"I believe this organisation does little to raise teaching standards or professionalism. Instead it simply acts as a further layer of bureaucracy while taking money away from teachers".

Neyroud also talks of the need for potential applicants to obtain a pre-employment qualification at their own expense with no guarantee that they will subsequently be employed. The British police service prides itself on attracting talented, brave, resourceful and conscientious people. Eroding the pay and conditions of police officers and seeking to introduce short term commissions into the service will in our opinion mean that the Police Service will no longer be an attractive proposition and would mean that we would be unlikely to be able to attract the best candidates.

We have heard talk that the Police Service and especially the Federation are resistant to change. This is poppycock as the service continues to change and evolve on an almost daily basis. Rather than being resistant to change, we have positively encouraged it providing it is good for the police service and public alike.

Speaking at an open meeting in London in September 2007, the then Policing Minister Tony McNulty described us as "the best bloody police service in the world". Theresa May has recently referred to us as the "finest service in the world". If the cumulative effect of Winsor, Neyroud and Hutton are allowed to take hold, then Mrs May could well be the last Home Secretary to be able to make that claim.

We would urge you to put pressure on the Home Office to rethink the shameful way they are treating the police service. We cannot understand why we are the only branch of the public sector to be attacked to such a degree and wonder if there is a correlation between this and our inability to take significant action to defend ourselves because we do not have access to industrial rights. We have always accepted this on the understanding that successive governments have recognised the unique and special status of the office of Constable.



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It is, of course ironic that, when the student riots erupted on the 10th November last year over funding cuts, the people who placed themselves in the front line to protect the public were the only group of workers unable to take industrial action over the cuts affecting them. There is a further irony that when the protesters attacked the Conservative Party headquarters, it was the police who prevented further damage and injury by placing their own safety on the line. We were unaware at that time that in 2011 we would be trying to protect ourselves from an attack by a Conservative led government.

We regularly have no choice but to give up our time, our days off, our holidays and our right to a family life. We regularly suffer assaults and abuse and place ourselves at the forefront of danger and adversity to protect the British public. We deal with death and destruction on an almost daily basis and have to deal with the trauma this brings to both us and the public alike. We accept this and are proud to serve but whilst we are happy to fight crime, villains and injustice, the current fight with the Government is one fight we should not be having.

To finish, we would ask you to mull over the Home Secretary's words to our conference last year:

"I will make this promise. I will always back you. I will always support you. I will always fight for you".

What a difference a year makes!

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss the contents of this letter and could either see you in your constituency or travel to London if it were easier for you. We have written to you both at your constituency address and your parliamentary address and by email to ensure that you have received this well in advance of the main meeting of the Police Negotiating Board on July 26th.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "M White".

Mark White
Secretary
Joint Branch Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B Brown".

Bob Brown
Chairman
Joint Branch Board