

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **Paul McKeever, Speech to Conference May 2011**

The police service is recognised as the finest in the world.

Wherever you go you will hear British police officers referred to with the highest regard.

Everywhere that is except within this coalition government.

A government that possesses such a degree of antipathy towards the police service that it is happy to denigrate officers routinely through its friends in the media and press.

Police officers who, day in, day out, are committing acts of real heroism, bravery and compassion have been dismissed by this government as no more than people not worth their salt.

We have heard you in the past praising police officers for the work we do and the bravery we exhibit.

However, these words appear to be no more than platitudes and ring hollow. They are no more than a sprinkling of sugar to disguise the very bitter reality of your true intentions.

We hope when you address conference shortly that you don't try to follow the same deceit because it is not something that anybody here today wants to hear.

Home Secretary before I go in to the detail of my speech there are a couple of areas that I must touch upon that have at best puzzled and at worse angered police officers.

The first is Libya and Yvonne Fletcher

The second is The Home Office's fascination, almost obsessive fascination, with policing in New York

How could we possibly find ourselves in the position of the Home Office granting visas to Libyan Police officers to study in this country?

Police officers from a country that everybody is very aware is completely different to the open, free democracy we enjoy here.

And at a time when the family and friends of PC Yvonne Fletcher are still waiting for justice 27 years after she brutally gunned down by Gadaffi's thugs on the streets of our own capital city.

Home Secretary; this policy is shameful.

Now I turn to New York

When Bill Bratton, the former police chief from New York, visited the UK recently he was very clear that he was working in a completely different policing environment in America to the one in this country.

He had rapidly increasing resources and saw a rise in police officer numbers – the complete converse to what is happening here.

He was very clear that there would be risks; real risks associated with the policies your government is following. And there will certainly be unintended consequences.

It is also worth noting that New York still has a murder rate four times that of London, never mind Harrogate or Weymouth.

Look at the NYPD crime figures for 2010 compared with 2009

Hardly figures to crow about.

And a survey conducted recently by many retired police commanders in the U.S showed they considered the crime reporting system to be unethical.

Home Secretary, we have been truly astonished at the massive and savage cuts to policing that have affected our members.

We have to put it in to context first.

The education budget has been cut by 8%; the science budget has been cut by 8%; the NHS has been ring fenced; overseas

development has been given billions of pounds of additional money and the defence budget has been cut by 7%.

And we have heard of the great detriment that is being caused by delivery of services within defence and the NHS.

And yet the policing budget has been cut by almost three times that of the Ministry of Defence.

And yet you tell us and the communities we service that there will be no effect on the delivery of policing.

That is sheer nonsense.

How was it, that in the CSR, the Home Office was dealt the worst hand by some margin?

Home Secretary - where were you?

We can only assume that these cuts are something that you welcome.

Let's compare and contrast your performance in the run up to the CSR to that of the Defence Secretary Liam Fox.

You tell me which of you who the most proactive and assertive fighting for their department

And how much will we actually save from these savage cuts. Well lets have a look at a diagram representing relatives government departmental spends

So, where has all this left us?

These cuts can only be made in one of three ways.

Efficiency savings, from a service that has already driven out every efficiency saving possible over past years.

Cuts in police numbers.

Or cuts in police officers' pay and conditions.

And now, it is being spun by both you and many senior police officers that WE have to make a choice between job losses and suffering up to a 20% cut in our pay and conditions.

No! Home Secretary – you chose to make these cuts.

You are responsible for what's happening to police officers and the communities we serve across the country.

You cannot tell us that we have a Hobson's Choice between losing jobs or cutting pay, because you got your figures wrong, or did you?

Is this really more about payback for perceived slights in the past.

Something that has been said to me from within government

Home Secretary; this isn't reform, this is revenge.

Revenge against 140,000 police officers serving their communities; putting their lives on the line for you. That suspicion was further compounded by your deafening silence in the weeks before the Winsor Review when spurious media accusations of 'grab-a-grand' police officers appeared to emanate from your office.

You knew the truth, yet chose to stay silent and let the myth and nonsense perpetuate.

The Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, said, it wasn't those in the public sector who got us in to this financial mess and we shouldn't be blamed for what has happened.

Well, it doesn't feel like that in the police service today.

We appear to have a Home Office policy that can simply be defined simply as 'be kind to criminals, be cruel to cops.'

One of the most confounding aspects of the denigration that has taken place over the last few months, is that Home office policy

seems to be driven by special advisors; members of think tanks who have little or no experience of life.

The question has to be asked – who is actually running policy at the Home Office.

Who is in charge?

So, what is it that police officers are actually facing and what has your government actually said about the cuts?

There has been a mantra saying that the government wants to be fair. And we accept that we have to take a fair share of the cuts.

But what is the reality?

Not only are we being expected to take a two year pay freeze; a pay freeze that was announced during a period of deflation and at a time when there was an expectation that inflation would be controlled around 2%. Not the  $x\%$  we now face and which is on the rise.

This in itself is going to have a hugely detrimental effect on police officers pay and pensions.

We are also expected to pay more for our pensions; get less and work longer.

However, on top of this, and in addition to what anyone in the public sector is being asked to face, we are told that we have to take an additional loss from our pay budget running in to hundreds of millions of pounds.

With perhaps more to come in the second part of the Winsor Report.

How can that possibly be fair by any measure?

When your government has talked about police pay; you compare us to those who are paid less than us in the public sphere.

But you conveniently forget to include all those such as doctors, lawyers and, of course, MPs, who earn considerably more than the average cop.

Fairness?

Police officers can smell unfairness and under-handedness at a thousand metres.

Home Secretary, this stinks.

A report by CIVITAS, the right of centre think tank and no enemy of your government, carried out research that showed a direct correlation between police numbers and the level of crime in countries across Europe.

They also used a technique that we have used as well.

Instead of looking the total number of police in each country they looked at the number of police per 100,000 of the population.

This is a more accurate assessment of police officer numbers, rather than crude total figures that have risen over the years.

When commentators say that police officer numbers have gone up since 1991 they fail to take into account that we have also had a major rise in population in the UK.

So, the police officer per 100,000 ratios gives a much more accurate picture.

At the moment in England and Wales we have around 257 police officers per 100,000 of the population, putting us well down the European Policing League Table, down in the bottom third.

If the cuts in numbers are introduced we will fall below 215 police officers per 100,000; lower than the dark days of the 1970's when policing was in meltdown and when we had far fewer responsibilities than we do today.

This figure will leave only three very high crime countries below us in the European Police Officer per 100,000 League Table.

Unfortunately, your government chose to disregard the report and you remain convinced you can cut the budget by 20% and decrease crime with a police service that you expect to concentrate only on fighting crime.

As any police officer in this room will tell you, there is so much more to policing than simply dealing with crime.

But let's not just take the word of police officers - what do the public say?

We recently carried out an Ipsos MORI poll.

The public feel the police should continue to be responsible for providing a wide range of non-crime fighting related services.

57% said the police should carry out a role caring for victims and witnesses of crime;

52% said the police should have responsibility for monitoring offenders who have been released from prison;

48% said the police should intervene in domestic rows and disputes;

34% believe the police should still have a duty arranging for vulnerable children to be taken in to care.

And what do the public think about your cuts to the policing budget?

The Ipsos MORI poll showed that a phenomenal 86% of the public are worried by what's happening.

Even if it's acceptable to you, they clearly don't wish to see the police service they receive diminish.

The first duty of any government is to protect its citizens.

It appears the public have little confidence in you to fulfil this requirement of government.

Home Secretary, you have abrogated your responsibility and breached their trust.

We have been calling for a Royal Commission on policing for many years, so that we had a considered view of policing and where policing was going.

Instead, we have, at best, a disjointed policy based purely on 20% cuts in policing, rather than considered and objective reform.

Some of the predication is reckless in itself.

There has been much talk about preserving the front line.

Indeed, the whole foundation of your policy has been based on this.

New terms have been introduced, like back-office and front-office - terms taken from banking.

And yet there is no agreed definition of what frontline means.

This is reckless in that no true risk assessment could have been done to judge the potential effect on the communities we serve.

It is also grossly insulting to many police officers in that it diminishes whatever they do if they are not deemed to be on the frontline for part of their service.

Perhaps you can tell us.

Are officers staffing rape suites on the frontline?

Officers in intelligence units countering terrorism – are they on the front line?

Are surveillance officers, whose very presence is covert and not seen by the public, not frontline?

The reality is this is no more a sleight of hand – trying to convince the public that all will be well when just about anyone you speak to in the police service privately, from chief constable to the newest recruit, knows it to be untrue.

Home Secretary, there is so much unhappiness and resentment in society at the moment that it is almost certain this will manifest itself in some sort of disorder over the coming months and years.

And the irony is that it will be us who will be expected to clear up the mess of protests by other groups in society when those policing the demonstration will be facing some of the deepest cuts of all.

As police officers we will clearly carry out our duty but if, as the media have predicted, that the average member of the public will be miserable with their lot the coalition should expect us to be a little bit more than miffed with an imposition that will see many of our members facing real, deep and prolonged hardship.

An analysis of data by Police Mutual Friendly Society found that a significant minority of officers already face financial stress and this is before the impact of any cuts being introduced by your government.

Unlike you Home Secretary, who prefers to take advice from people who have just left university and have no experience of life let alone policing, I take my from years of experience of being a police officer and by listening to the views of 140,000 cops out there in the country.

Put your hand up if you think they will be safer.

Last year at conference I warned of the likelihood of disorder and this was dismissed as unrealistic and scaremongering.

Well, let's have a look at the reality.

Home Secretary, we are careering towards what could be the meltdown of the British police service.

Falsely predicated policies; policies driven by a bitter antipathy towards policing and police officers

A disregard for the work police officers do, which has left some of the most committed, capable and honest, hard-working members of society demoralised, angry and shocked by a government they

thought had some understanding and empathy towards the police service.

How wrong we were.

To coin a phrase used by the Monty Python team - is the party of law and order dead – has it ceased to exist?

But this is no laughing matter.

Home Secretary, today I have not just been addressing you.

My message today is also to all those communities we serve, day in and day out.

Revealing to them the truth behind a government that pretends to be reforming the police service while it is in fact punishing police officers and the communities they serve with total disregard for the consequences.

I appeal to everyone in the country.

Save your police service from the recklessness inherent within this government's cavalier and ill-conceived policies.

Home Secretary, before I invite you to address conference I first must caution you.....

You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence.