

# Council Meeting - 18 April 2011

## Notice of Motion – Police and Crime Commissioners

### 1 Introduction

The following notice has been submitted from Councillors P. Hughes, I. Shires, D. Shires and Cook:

*This Council notes that the Government wants to have directly elected Police Commissioners with the intention also to axe Police Authorities and that the LGA is opposing this change.*

*The Council expresses deep concern that this will lead to the politicisation of the Police and jeopardise their operational independence. Such a radical change would be a diversion in precious resources away from front-line policing.*

*This Council believes accountability of the Police would be best served in strengthening the ties, by other means, between our local neighbourhoods and Councillors.*

*This Council therefore asks the Leader of the Council to write to the Borough's MPs informing them of this motion and asking them to oppose the Government's proposals for elected Police Commissioners.*

### 2 Background Information

In July 2010, a new programme of reform to address policing, organised crime and protection of the country's borders was unveiled by the Home Secretary. '**Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People**' sets out the government's vision for how the police service in England and Wales should become more accountable to the public and responsive to local people, more focused at a national level and more effective at tackling crime, as well as providing better value for money. The publication of this document marked the beginning of a public consultation on the key features of the governments reform programme. This programme includes the introduction of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners to replace the existing Police Authority.

### 3 Police and Crime Commissioners

The Home Office document '**A New Approach to Fighting Crime**' sets out the key aspects of this role, some of which are detailed below:

- Police and Crime Commissioners are seen as the centrepiece of the government's new policing model with a mandate to hold the police to account on behalf of the public.
- They will be elected once every four years with the first elections scheduled for May 2012.
- They will have the power to hire and fire Chief Constables, set the policing budget and produce the police and crime plan

- They will consider data from local Community Safety Partnerships, be able to bring them together and call them to account
- They will have responsibility for tackling all crime in their area and need to ensure their force works collaboratively with other forces and national bodies to tackle cross border threats and counter-terrorism
- Police and Crime Commissioners will be scrutinised by Police and Crime Panels, drawn from locally elected councillors and independent lay members.
- The panel will have powers to hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account.
- In cases of misconduct, they will be able to ask the Independent Police Complaints Commission to investigate the Commissioner.

#### **4 Local Government Association Response**

Such a radical change has provoked a mixed response from agencies and practitioners. The LGA has stated that although they believe local accountability on policing needs to be improved and communities should be given a say in policing, they do not believe introducing Commissioners is the best way to do this since it could fragment local partnerships and weaken the ability of the police, councils and other public services to cut crime.

The Police and Social Responsibility Bill passed into Committee Stage in the House of Commons on 18 January 2011. As part of the scrutiny process, the LGA submitted written evidence, which outlined its response to several aspects of the Bill, in particular, detailing an alternative model to the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners.

The LGA model is based upon the reintegration of police accountability structures with local government. They believe that this model would deliver the shared aim of improving police accountability from local to national levels, providing the public with a greater say in policing priorities. At a partnership level, they say it would enhance rather than compromise crime prevention and joint working and at the force level it would provide a more dynamic and effective accountability. The LGA believes this alternative model to be consistent with place-based budgeting and that it would deliver real financial savings, ensuring that all resources can be used for frontline policing.

The legislative framework for this and other key coalition commitments is detailed within the **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill** which received its third reading in the House of Commons on 31 March 2011.



Jamie Morris  
Executive Director

1 April 2011