

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 9 November 2005

SUBJECT: Police Force Structures

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of the recent “announcement” on police force structures in England and Wales. There are clear implications for the Halton area, both from an operational policing position and for the various partnerships that exist in the Borough which involve the Police Service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board consider the implications of the proposals and express a view if thought appropriate.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) were commissioned by Hazel Blears, Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety, to undertake a piece of research to address the question as to whether the present 43 police force structure is the right one to meet the challenges posed by the current and future policing environment.

3.2 The report concluded that larger forces than those that exist at present were the preferred option for the future. A large force, using the definition in the report, would be one employing more than 4,000 police officers. Cheshire currently has 2,207, Merseyside 4,339 and Greater Manchester 8,119. There are currently only 7 forces with over 4,000 officers (Appendix A shows the size of each police force in England and Wales).

3.3 The report looks at other possibilities short of wholesale mergers, such as:

- (1) Greater collaboration between forces;
- (2) Lead force for specialist capabilities;
- (3) Lead regional force;
- (4) Federation of forces;
- (5) Strategic forces (mergers).

3.4 The driving force behind the report’s conclusions is the belief that the current 43 force arrangement does not have the capability and capacity

to provide effective protective services both in the current climate and the future.

3.5 In this context protective services (referred to as level 2 services in the report) are described as:

- Major Crime (homicide);
- Serious, Organised and Cross Border Crime;
- Counter Terrorism and Extremism;
- Civil Contingencies;
- Critical Incidents;
- Public Order;
- Strategic Roads Policing.

3.6 The report does not see any need to make changes to the Basic Command Unit structure as it sees this as having significant success in dealing with local crime. In effect, the BCU structure would be aggregated together within any new merged force.

3.7 The report gives an indication of some “design considerations” around the development of combined forces. These are:

- Size;
- Mix of capability;
- Criminal markets;
- Geography;
- Risk;
- Co-terminosity;
- Identity.

3.8 These have subsequently been further developed by the Home Secretary with the addition of the following two additional “considerations”:

- clarity of command and control and accountability;
- costs and efficiency.

4.0 STATUS OF THE PAPER

4.1 The paper was the result of a piece of research commissioned by the Minister. It is not, at this stage, a formal consultation paper. Police Forces and Police Authorities have been asked by the Home Secretary for their views and proposals by December. Attached at Appendix B is the timetable set out by the Home Secretary. It is assumed that when proposals are firmed up there would be a period of more formal consultation in the new year. Under the Police Reform Act 1996, the Secretary of State for the Home Department may impose amalgamations, if he/she so wishes after a period of four months’ consultation.

- 4.2 A central unit headed by John Gifford, Chief Constable of Staffordshire, has been established to co-ordinate and support the local and regional consultation and assessment process.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR HALTON

- 5.1 Based on the assumption that the merged option (strategic force) will be the order of the day, and the following additional criteria mentioned by the Secretary of State when briefing Chairs of Police Authorities and Chief Constables will apply, i.e.:

- only whole force mergers will take place and no existing forces will be split; and
- the new arrangements will not cut across government office boundaries

then there are only three possibilities open to the Cheshire Force. They are:

- Cheshire/Merseyside;
- Cheshire/Greater Manchester; or
- Something extremely large, e.g. Merseyside/Greater Manchester/Cheshire, regional force, etc.

- 5.2 The Board will need to take a view on what it believes will be in the best interests of the public of Halton, and in particular which arrangements will provide the best local policing arrangements in this area. It may, of course, wish to comment on the potential effectiveness of some of the other options mentioned in paragraph 3.3.

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Given the pace at which these developments are happening, the Board may wish to make comment or contribute to this important debate.

7.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are clearly some key policy implications for the Board to consider when forming its view. One of the Board's priorities is "Ensuring Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods". Irrespective of some of the wider (and indeed important) issues raised by the review, the Board will want to be satisfied that whatever new arrangements are put in place they have a sustained focus on local policing issues in the Borough. This is a major and ongoing concern for the public.

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.0 The Board will also need to ensure that the impact of these changes does not in any way weaken the strong partnerships which already exist in this area.

APPENDIX A

2004/05 Force	Total Strength Officers	Police	Total Strength Support Staff
Avon & Somerset		3,398	2,005
Bedfordshire		1,232	713
Cambridgeshire		1,418	832
Cheshire		2,207	1,137
Cleveland		1,689	748
Cumbria		1,260	730
Derbyshire		2,082	1,165
Devon & Cornwall		3,399	2,034
Dorset		1,475	881
Durham		1,738	736
Dyfed-Powys		1,183	531
Essex		3,230	1,968
Gloucestershire		1,308	663
Greater Manchester		8,119	3,303
Gwent		1,438	688
Hampshire		3,804	1,965
Hertfordshire		2,145	1,414
Humberside		2,252	1,034
Kent		3,630	2,228
Lancashire		3,586	1,715
Leicestershire		2,311	1,033
Lincolnshire		1,234	678
London, City of		881	298
Merseyside		4,339	2,126
Metropolitan Police		31,073	13,561
Norfolk		1,554	984
Northamptonshire		1,289	973
Northumbria		4,088	1,491
North Wales		1,676	867
North Yorkshire		1,561	928
Nottinghamshire		2,522	1,318
South Wales		3,316	1,510
South Yorkshire		3,307	1,729
Staffordshire		2,309	1,325
Suffolk		1,323	813
Surrey		1,959	1,472
Sussex		3,094	1,950
Thames Valley		4,189	2,611
Warwickshire		1,012	590
West Mercia		2,380	1,492
West Midlands		8,154	3,143

West Yorkshire	5,671	3,016
Wiltshire	1,227	811
England & Wales	141,059	71,207

APPENDIX B

FORCE RESTRUCTURING: EVALUATION OF OPTIONS SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 2005

Period	Action by forces/authorities	Deliverables
19 September to end September	Establish review teams	Notify Home Office of lead contacts in force and Authority
October	In conjunction with other forces & authorities in the region, and CJS and local government partners, identify options for restructuring; undertake initial analysis of options and produce short list. Initial work to be co-ordinated and supported in each region by HMIC and subsequently by central team.	Report to Home Office setting out initial analysis of options, including against national criteria and identifying short-list of options for further examination in next phase.
November	Work up detailed cost-benefit analysis of short-listed options and identify preferred option.	Report to Home Office setting out analysis to date of each option and draft proposals.
December	Validate and refine preferred option; commence implementation planning	Submit final report to Home Office by 23 December setting out full cost-benefit analysis of each of short-listed options, the preferred option, the rationale for the recommendation and initial implementation plans.