

Review of force structures in England and Wales

Introduction

Last year the Home Secretary commissioned a review of force structures in England and Wales. The findings and recommendations of this review have now been published in the report 'Closing the Gap - A review of the 'Fitness for Purpose' of the current structure of Policing in England and Wales', which is available on the [Home Office](#) website.

The Home Secretary has now had the opportunity to discuss the contents of the report with Chief Constables and Police Authority Chairs and has subsequently set a timetable for 'Changing the Landscape'. Timescales are very tight and culminate with the need to submit a report to the Home Office by 23 December 2005. This report will outline; a full cost-benefit analysis of the short-listed options (see below), together with the preferred option; the rationale for the recommendation; and, initial implementation plans.

The Current Structure

Broadly speaking, the current structure of policing within England and Wales can be broken down as follows:

- National Level (e.g. the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA))
- Force Level
- BCUs (Basic Command Unit)
- Neighbourhood Policing Teams

The role of SOCA has already been legislated for however, below the national level, the report identifies three primary areas of capability required by policing, namely:

- The development of local and neighbourhood policing
- The provision of protective services* to national standards
- The organisation of affordable support and strategic development

There is clear central support for a policing structure that revolves around neighbourhood policing teams within BCUs and work is already being undertaken nationally in this respect. However, the report also highlights a requirement for a more efficient, integrated platform above this level. Further it identifies severe shortcomings in relation to the capacity of existing forces, particularly those numerically smaller in size, to deliver the protective services to an appropriate level.

Although the HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies)report provides for various options, it seems that there will need to proffer exceptionally cogent arguments should it be decided to pursue certain alternatives (e.g. a strategic force that has fewer than 4,000 officers or a strategic force that crosses existing regional boundaries**).

The Options

Although it is important to give some consideration to all viable alternatives, it is clear that there will have to be exceptional grounds for any option that: (a) does not exceed 4,000 officers, or (b) goes beyond the Eastern Region (i.e. Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, and Bedfordshire). In view of the fact that Essex Police only has c.3,200 officers, it would be extremely unwise to propose to do nothing. A breakdown of some pertinent regional data is outlined below (dated April 2005).

Population	Force	Police Officers	Police Staff	Total	Council Tax
1,600,000	Essex	3,230	1,968	5,198	£104.76
1,036,000	Hertfordshire	2,145	1,414	3,559	£118.09
803,000	Norfolk	1,554	984	2,538	£145.53

716,000	Cambridgeshire	1,418	832	2,250	£135.54
672,000	Suffolk	1,323	813	2,136	£125.01
571,000	Bedfordshire	1,232	713	1,945	£111.98
5,398,000		10,902	6,724	17,626	

On 28 October 2005, Essex Police and Essex Police Authority submitted an initial Business Case in accordance with the Home Office Guidance. On 9 November 2005, a response was received from the Home Office requesting that Essex Police, together with Essex Police Authority, look at three options in more detail. These options are:

- A Regional Force made up of the six police forces
- An East/West option, which means Essex would merge with Norfolk and Suffolk and Hertfordshire would merge with Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire
- A North/South option, which would put Essex with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire would merge with Norfolk and Suffolk

In addition to this, it has been agreed by Essex Police and Essex Police Authority to give consideration to a fourth option, namely:

- Essex as a 'stand alone strategic force'.

As part of the review process, Essex Police and Essex Police Authority are keen to consult as widely as possible. Consequently, please could you use the [questionnaire](#) to let us have your comments on each of the four options. The full rationale for the changes is shown in the HMIC report 'Closing the Gap' which is available on the [Home Office website](#).

The closing date for consultation is midday on Friday 2 December 2005.

The Current Landscape



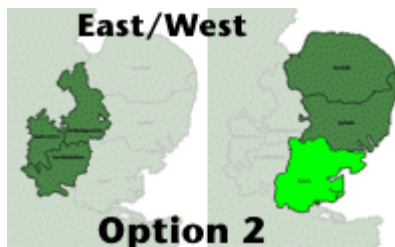
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Norfolk	1,554	984	2,538
Cambridgeshire	1,418	832	2,250
Suffolk	1,323	813	2,136
Bedfordshire	1,232	713	1,945
	10,902	6,724	17,626

Option 1 - The Eastern Region



Force	Police Officer	Police Staff	Total
The Eastern Region	10,902	6,724	17,626

Option 2 - East/West Split



Force	Police Officer	Police Staff	Total
'West Anglia' (Herts, Cambs, Beds)	4,795	2,959	7,754
'East Anglia' (Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk)	6,107	3,765	9,872
	10,902	6,724	17,626

Option 3 - North/South Split



Force	Police Officer	Police Staff	Total
'North Anglia' (Norfolk, Cambs, Suffolk)	4,295	2,629	6,924
'South Anglia' (Essex, Herts, Beds)	6,607	4,095	10,702
	10,902	6,724	17,626

Option 4 - Essex as a Stand Alone Strategic Force



Force	Police Officer	Police Staff	Total
Essex	3,230	1,968	5,198

* The seven key protective policing activities are: Major Crime (Homicide); Serious, Organised Crime and Cross Border Crime; Counter Terrorism and Extremism; Civil Contingencies and Emergency Planning; Critical Incidents; Public Order; and, Strategic Roads Policing.

**Apart from the Metropolitan Police, only six other forces have more than 4,000 police officers, namely: GMP; West Midlands; West Yorkshire; TVP; Merseyside; and, Northumbria.