

NP CONFERENCE 20TH JUNE 2011

HO MINISTER'S SPEECH

Thank you very much Stuart.

Good morning everybody. Thank you indeed for inviting me here to speak at this conference. I am particularly pleased to do so. A few months ago I had a meeting in Westminster with Stuart and with Richard Crompton to talk specifically about the issue of Neighbourhood Policing and some of the things which I now wish to talk about were very much built on that conversation. And the starting point is that this provides what I think is quite an important opportunity for me on behalf of the government to express our very strong support for the concept of Neighbourhood Policing. Very often in today's politics the nature of our debate points up division and there is frequent criticism and politicians are often apparently unready to credit past development under the auspices of a previous government where often things may be perceived to have been a success by almost everybody else. But I think one of the great achievements over the last few years has been the re-discovery in this country of Neighbourhood Policing and I use that term advisedly because it seems to me that the concept of Neighbourhood Policing, the concept of a visible presence in our communities, the concept of visible patrol and re-assurance is hardly a new one. But we all know the history, and there was a period in our policing practice where there was, I think, a change in past years towards a model which focused, perhaps it was called intelligence based policing or perhaps it was called something else, on the idea that what really matters is how crime has successfully been fought. The visible presence wasn't necessarily a key component of that and I don't believe the public were ever happy about that. The public has always wanted that re-assuring presence of a uniformed presence on their streets. And it seemed to me to be ironic that, at a time when the politicians were going over with the select committee several years ago to see what was going on in Chicago and the Chicago community policing model over there - to reflect on the fact that all they were doing over there was putting in place the tried and tested British model of community policing which involved police officers being present in communities and engaging with those communities. And pretty much at the same time this was being re-discovered in the UK and I believe that the investment in all senses of the word that was seen over recent years in Neighbourhood Policing by forces and supported by the government was absolutely the right one and a key component of that it seems to me was the introduction of Police Community Support Officers and their role within NPTs and I have always flatly disagreed with those who have questioned the role of PCSOs and I am pleased to say we really have moved on from the time where their role was questioned by too many, sometimes within policing or sometimes externally by harsh critics. And I think there was a failure to understand the value of extending the police family and the value which PCSOs could bring in being out in their communities engaging with people, not capable of being abstracted, precisely because they do not have the full range of powers and we certainly are committed to the idea of the extended policing family and PCSOs being a key part of that and that is my starting premise; I think Neighbourhood Policing is a success story, the public values it and I think it is very important part of today's policing model and I have a strong attachment to ensuring

that we retain that visible and available policing for the public of which Neighbourhood Policing is the bedrock.

Clearly though, we are all collectively facing a number of key challenges, not least the fiscal challenge, therefore we should take the opportunity to ask ourselves what the future of Neighbourhood Policing should be in this new world where very difficult decisions are being taken about how police forces are being shaped. The first thing I want to say about that is that I do believe that the model of policing reform which the govt is advancing is a coherent one which certainly sees Neighbourhood Policing being a significant component. I have often talked, and will repeat today, what I think will be the paradox of policing policy over recent years which is that the centre – if you like the Home Office, the Govt. - was interfering in what I consider the local, where local decisions should probably be taken, interfering rather too much in the exercise of discretion, setting a large number of bureaucratic targets, there was a lot of top down direction of policing as there were in other parts of the public service. And yet paradoxically the centre was not, I think, sometimes strong enough when it needed to give strategic lead and help forces to work together. The coherence of our reform lies in the vision of turning that paradox on its head and saying that in today's world we want to restore professional discretion, de-bureaucratise policing, allow professionals to take decisions, but of course to hold them to account for those decisions and that means strengthening local accountability and a key means in doing that, though not the only one, is through the introduction of the election of Police and Crime Commissioners next year to replace police authorities. I should just take the opportunity of repeating govt's commitment to introducing that reform, irrespective of what the Lords has done in its voting and of course we are in sensible discussions in how the Bill could be improved, but we do intend that PCCs will be introduced in elections next year in May across England & Wales and that is because it is a coalition agreement, a manifesto commitment on the part of both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservative party and therefore the elected house in the end will rightly have the final say about this and of course will discuss sensibly how the reform should be put in place and ensure that there are the right checks and balances to protect the British model of impartial policing and operational independence of police forces. At the same time as strengthening local accountability we also are ensuring that the centre has the right role when it comes to ensuring that police forces work together, ensuring they are able to operate together, particularly to meet those threats that are national and deal with those issues that cross force boundaries. So a new strategic policing requirement, the introduction of the new Crime Agency and a stronger role for the centre, including the Home Office, in driving value for money and collective action by forces where it makes sense. So in that new world one thing to be clear about is that we are not going to prescribe a model of policing at the frontline. I am happy to re-state our commitment to the concept of Neighbourhood Policing but we are not dictating in this area, it is for Chief Constables and for those that hold Chief Constables to account to decide how resources are deployed and what is the proper model of policing and how policing should be delivered in their area. And in that respect what we have done is so that once PCCs are introduced, we will, consistent with the general direction of travel which is to reduce the ring fencing of grants and give more discretion to the local level as to how resources are deployed, we will lift the ring-fence on the Neighbourhood Policing Fund, some £340m which has of course been largely protected relative to other aspects of the policing budget, when PCCs have been introduced and that lifting of the ring-fence which has already happened in London because we have already had an elected mayor who is able, working with the top team in the MET to make these decisions and essentially what we are saying is we don't see why this should be prescribed from the top - they should be taken at a more local level by democratically elected representatives at that level. It is not to say we

don't value either Neighbourhood Policing or PCSOs - we do - but it is to respect the need to take these decisions closer to communities and reflecting local conditions and local preferences. And what I want to go and say is that I don't think it is about protecting the current model of Neighbourhood Policing and when I was talking to Richard and Stuart we began to discuss the idea of Neighbourhood Policing+ which is the title of this conference and the reason I think it is Neighbourhood Policing+ is because what I want to emphasise today is I think there is a huge opportunity to build on Neighbourhood Policing not just to ensure that we continue to deliver it, but that actually we really maximise its potential in the new environment and I think one can identify three areas in which it is possible to look for that enhanced role for Neighbourhood Policing Teams.

Some of this is beginning to happen in many areas and none of what I think I am about to say is something that will be foreign to all of you in this room - many of you will be doing these things. But I think it is a good idea to actually develop this concept - that not only are we going to maintain Neighbourhood Policing but we are going to maximise it and take it into new areas.

The first area you can look at an enhanced role is in relation to how we interact with the CJS and pursue the shared goal of preventing crime in the first place, but then of reducing re-offending.

And as we develop the concept of Integrated Offender Management I have seen some really positive examples of these and the interaction between policing and probation and other services around the country, differing models but really positive ones, I do think it is possible to conceive that Neighbourhood Policing Teams will play a very important part in this, in the delivery of integrated offender management, when it comes to ensuring that Prolific and Priority Offenders, those we know will otherwise simply go on re-offending are given both the right level of support and supervision by the IOM teams, and Neighbourhood Policing teams, by being on the ground are very well placed to play an important part in that. We are also developing the concept of Restorative Justice. In a short time I am to be elaborating on the concept we are developing of Neighbourhood Justice and the idea that we are going to try and introduce a notion of community justice which very strongly focuses on preventing the escalation of criminals and of breaking the cycle of crime which looks at a new role for magistrates – and in which the enhanced discretion of police officers through things like neighbourhood resolution will, I think, will play a very positive role and it seems to me that it is Neighbourhood Policing teams that could be central to this concept of neighbourhood justice where possible offending is actually prevented and we're ensuring that where it happens it is dealt with appropriately and swiftly and much more with the interests of victims at heart using restorative justice principles. And so I think that in both IOM and restorative justice, Neighbourhood Policing Teams have a potential additional role to that which they are currently pursuing. So that is the first plus that I can see.

The second plus is that I believe that Neighbourhood Policing, as with other forms of policing, must be locked into the delivery by partners of a concerted effort to prevent crime. The police cannot fight crime alone and we are going to be hearing a bit about the importance of effective partnership. It is very important for me to restate that nothing that we are doing in relation to the introduction of police and crime commissioners is intended in any way to sideline the significance, the importance of effective partnerships through community safety partnerships at the local level. Indeed it is intended to strengthen it and police and crime commissioners must work with community safety partnerships and we have been having some important discussions about how that will take place.

But at a time when resources are tight, it is very important that partners do not walk away from these effective local partnerships. The police are the can-do service. They are a key element, of course, of community safety partnerships but they are not the only element. Others have statutory duties here too. And therefore effective, non-bureaucratic partnerships with a purpose need to be continued. And that concept of the partnership I think can be extended right down to the very local: to the neighbourhood level. And so I think that Neighbourhood Policing will continue to involve others who may receive their funding and support from other government departments or other sources.

In other words I don't believe that Neighbourhood Policing teams can be viewed narrowly: I think that we should be looking at the importance of the extended police family. And I have seen for myself so many examples of, for instance, warden schemes where they receive their funding and support from local authorities. There is the community safety accreditation scheme, for instance, helping to provide security on our trains and in many other areas. So I think that this is the second area where we will see Neighbourhood Policing Plus. I think that it will be supported by others. And it is very important, it seems to me, that neighbourhood policing is locked into that partnership delivery of safer communities at the very local level.

These partnerships don't just exist at the level of decision making forums in the formal CSP organisation or at the strategic level. They really exist on the ground, where police officers are able to work with those that are responsible, for instance, for housing or other public services to ensure that they are able deal with criminality and keep people safe.

The third area where I can see that we have the opportunity for Neighbourhood Policing Plus is that I think we must look at the potential for greater public involvement. Sir Robert Peel's infamous dictum of *the police are the public and the public are the police* seems to me has never been more true. And I think we must continue to look for ways of engaging communities in helping to ensure that their communities are stronger and safer in working alongside the police.

Helen Newlove has been leading some work on active, safer communities. This is about building on what I believe is a desire on the part of communities to help ensure the safety of their own area. And neighbourhood policing teams are very importantly positioned as providing the bedrock of that: providing the means by which people are able to come together and help each other and help themselves. I was recently up in Manchester looking at precisely that: about how neighbourhood policing teams have been engaged not just in the area of Integrated Offender Management, but also in helping to rebuild communities that have become very fragmented over recent years and, in making them stronger, have helped to make policing stronger as well. And the interaction between police officers, between PCSOs, between the local authority and between community representatives was an impressive and important one.

And I think that new organisations, new forms of help will spring up. We have seen it with, for instance, Streetwatch, which is growing in support around the country. We see it in relation to things like street pastors playing an important role too. But I don't believe that the concept of the Big Society is a new one, I just think that it is an untapped one. And that we should be building on the idea of stronger community engagement with local policing.

So that is the third area where I think we can see the potential for Neighbourhood Policing Plus. And in that I do think that actually the whole concept of what we mean by neighbourhood policing will start to become ever more local. We have been

organising around the idea of neighbourhood policing teams, around the idea of wards. But actually the interesting thing that has happened with the launch of the *Police.uk* website which has received the most astonishing interest since it was launched: 420 million hits since it was launched. There has been no Government website which has ever received this amount of traffic. And it continues to receive very significant traffic too. What it reveals is that people are really interested in is their street. And what is happening in their street. And I wanted to mention that website not just because it reveals part of what I think is the Government's commitment to transparency and accountability, but also it provides the opportunity for people to connect with their neighbourhood policing teams. It was never conceived as just, if you like, a negative vehicle, so that people could find out what was going on and complain about it. But actually as a positive vehicle, whereby people could connect with their policing teams and find out more about how they could help each other. And we have very ambitious plans to build upon the success of it.

So neighbourhood policing plus: plus neighbourhood justice, incorporating integrated offender management and restorative justice, plus partners and others who will help to deliver neighbourhood policing and plus the public - Increasingly engaged with neighbourhood policing teams through the interaction of things like social media.

And all of this brings me to my final point, which is how can we do all this given that there is what I mentioned at the beginning which is a resourcing challenge for policing? Well that is a challenge that is simply a fact, it is not going to go away we have a fiscal deficit in this country and we have to deal with it. And I have no doubt that the reductions in spending that we are asking forces to make are challenging. But we do believe that they are manageable. And within that I am absolutely convinced that it is vital that we protect the frontline, drive efficiency and savings in the back and middle office, but also productivity improvements in the frontline itself and minimise spending on non-essential services. That will require a fundamental redesign of policing but within that I believe that the public will continue to have particular attachment to the visible and reassuring police presence in their streets. That is why every force that I have spoken to, every chief that I have spoken to and every authority continues to value neighbourhood policing and seeks to prioritise its delivery over the next few years. I do not believe that neighbourhood policing is at any kind of risk of a consequence of the fact that forces are having to make savings. Indeed we have seen some forces who are actually, through the redesign that they are making, and the re-allocation of resources have actually been increasing neighbourhood policing numbers as they move resources around within their forces. Others have given a clear commitment to maintain neighbourhood policing, and I welcome that.

Neighbourhood policing is important. It is important because the public particularly value it. It is important, not just for reassurance, but because it can help to prevent crime and also can do more to address reoffending. I think that neighbourhood policing has been a stunning rediscovery by the British Police Service. It is a great British policing success story. Let us cherish it. Let us maintain it. But let us now build upon it. Thank you very much.