

**CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH
CONSTABLES' CONFERENCE, BOURNEMOUTH
TUESDAY 15 MAY 2012
(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)**

Julie Nesbit will say:

Policing Minister, Guests, Fraternal delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Constables' Conference 2012.

I welcome you here today at a time when the future of the Police Service in England and Wales very much hangs in the balance. Constables' accept that there are hard decisions to be made, and we welcome change and reform. But these must be the right decisions, changes and reform must be necessary, and improve on current methods of service delivery. As the Home Secretary said in her Ministerial statement on 27th March this year:

'Fairness is an essential part of any new system of pay and conditions'

I will come back to this point later, because I find it very difficult indeed to find exactly where the majority of recommendations in Winsor 2 are fair to Constables. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Constables will be considerably worse off if the Winsor 2 recommendations are implemented, and will prove decidedly unfair to the very people the Home Secretary described in the same statement as:

'The Bedrock of British policing'

That is exactly how 102,000 Constables should be viewed. We want to work with Government to find the best deal for Constables and we want to work with you Minister to find the best deal for the public. We know that we are at a dangerous crossroads and we need help and support of our Home Secretary to stay on the right path, and remain as she describes:

'...the finest police service in the world'

The Government should work with us, if the end result is to meet our mutual expectations of a more efficient Police Service, which is also properly rewarded. Minister will you work with us?

The more generous observers among us may believe that the changes to pay and conditions suggested in Winsor 2 are largely a force of the unfortunate circumstance of a beleaguered economy, and that the Police Service must take its share of the national pain. A different view might be that successive Governments have long looked for the opportunities to cut the cost of police pay, and that the present economic climate has given them the perfect excuse to swing the axe.

From either perspective the result is the same. Unadulterated implementation of Winsor's recommendations will have long-term, lasting, and harmful effects on Policing - from the quality of new recruits, to the numbers of officers available for frontline duty, and to the morale of long-serving Constables. The end result will be a disillusioned public, who will initially direct their frustrations at the Police, but ultimately hold their elected politicians to account.

Constables feel that Policing in particular has been unfairly targeted for 'efficiency savings'. Not only are we hit by the 20% Departmental cuts, but there is no rise in cost-of-living allowances, and we were top of the list of public sector workers not to receive our contracted annual pay increment.

Honesty and integrity is of paramount importance to Constables. Minister we ask that Government is honest with us.

If the underlying driver of these changes is the lack of money, then we ask the Government to have the honesty to say as much, rather than disguising the fact in two very long reports, with recycled recommendations going back many years, even to the time of the Sheehy report of 1993.

It is not for the Constables to set out what should be the political and economic priorities for the Government, and the respective claims by Departments for a fair share of the public purse. And is it for us to tell Government how it should raise revenue from taxpayers, and in what proportions.

But the argument must be accepted that the Police Service is the ultimate public service. We stand apart from the rest of the public service, and yet we underpin it, enabling the other public services to function.

It is the Constable who stands between the ordinary members of the public and the threat of harm ranging from anti-social behaviour, muggers, and burglars to rapists, murderers and terrorists.

We put ourselves in harm's way to do our job. No other civilian public service bears the physical risk of that moral purpose.

What also sets us apart is that we have no recourse to industrial action to leverage our case, though I can see our resolve on this exclusion from industrial action being increasingly tested.

The crucial point is, that there are but a handful of jobs that are considered so essential to society's functioning that workers are banned from striking, and Constables are very much at the forefront of this select few. I believe the very least we can expect in return for this consideration is fair treatment from Government, and an acknowledgement and appreciation of our special circumstance. This

must be reflected in appropriate and fair remuneration, especially if we want to continue to attract the best candidates to the Service.

There can be no escaping the fact that lowering pay will discourage high-achieving applicants. Minister can you explain how exactly lower pay and worsening conditions will attract a higher calibre of Police Constable?

And how can it be fair to freeze the increments of a young officer at his or her third increment, just at the age when he or she would be setting up home, or starting a family.

There is clearly something very wrong with these actions, but even more worrying is Winsor's skewed and distorted view of the Police Service organisationally. Where is the evidence that anything in the present model of policing is not working. We understand that it is sensible and responsible to look for savings and best practice, and we continue to support all efforts to achieve this.

There have been numerous proposals in several reports in recent years aimed at making the Police Service leaner, more efficient, less bureaucratic and generally 'fit for purpose'.

There is no sense of this in the Winsor 2 Report.

The new raft of changes to terms and conditions of service, to pay and pensions, and the wholesale reduction to numbers of Constables will starve the Police Service of the essential resources necessary to serve the public effectively. Inevitably, this will lead to a reduction in the standing of Constables in our society, and the public perception of our strength and capability.

This will not only have serious consequences to the sense of safety currently enjoyed by the public, but also encourage the criminal elements in society to be more audacious as our perceived performance declines, and our integrity is compromised. It is not difficult to imagine the effect this will have on the 'social fabric' of the Big Society the Government envisages. In reality, these reforms will deliver a Bad Society, where Constables will no longer be a warranted officer of the Crown, but rather they will be employees of private companies; servicing shareholders who are profit-driven rather than civic-minded.

Government cuts and Winsor 2 severely affect the livelihoods of Constables. Moreover, they put Constables' lives at risk, and the safety of members of the public we serve.

The Government seems to be under the illusion that the harsh sentencing of those involved in last summer's riots will linger in the

memory, and discourage disaffected opportunists and would-be criminals from getting involved in future disturbances.

Our experience as Constables tells us otherwise: very few people who get caught up in the unique circumstances which lead to such a wave of public disorder are there to go on the rampage. Most are carried along once the initial line of self-restraint has been crossed, and mob mentality takes over. Most commentators would agree that the economy was a significant factor in causing the riots spreading across London and to Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. The riots caused an estimated £200 million of property damage, a total of 3,443 crimes were linked to the disorder, and tragically left five people dead and many people injured, including a number of Constables.

We cannot be confident that we have seen the last of such disturbances, and we might do well to remember the Home Secretary's prediction in September 2010 that:

'The British public don't simply resort to violent unrest in the face of challenging economic circumstances',

or that we can, *'...cut police budgets without risking violent unrest'.*

As it was, we had to marshal reinforcements from forces across England and Wales to stem the tide of lawlessness in several riot hotspots, and combat the large-scale runaway disorder with sheer force of numbers. Minister, what will happen next time if Winsor 2 is implemented? What happens when we are tasked to deal with a similar situation with a decimated, demoralised and dispossessed frontline of Constables? Of course we will do our best as we always have done. But there is a very real danger that we will fail.

The cost to businesses and the economy should this happen will be astronomical and any short term savings from cuts to Policing made by Government will be a mere drop in the ocean.

Minister if this happens again, what will you do? Send in the army? Imagine the consequences such an action both for the public and our international reputation. What then of the *'finest police service in the world'*?

The simple fact is, with 16,000 fewer Police Officers what we need are highly motivated, fairly rewarded frontline Constables. The recommendations in Winsor 2 fail to deliver this, and will therefore fail our communities at a time when Constables are being called on to work harder and longer, for less and less in return.

Winsor 2 threatens to bring a wrecking-ball to the achievements made in Policing in recent years.

The fact is that the current system is working, as is borne out in statistics which show crime figures in recent years falling. Why can't the Government see the logical connection between falling crime and adequate Police numbers, and admit that fewer Police will mean more crime.

Winsor 2 will not deliver safety and security for our communities.

The truth is that Winsor 2 is founded on such outdated working practices that it can best be described as Jurassic. The report thrives on punishing poor performance instead of valuing, recognising, and encouraging good performance, which he purports to advocate. In fact, all he has done is to overhaul the Professional Development Review process to highlight poor performance, which could find 10% of Constables subject to unsatisfactory performance procedures regardless of how well they perform. How is this fair?

The 'X factor' is quantified, yet will be removed from officers who are injured. How is this fair?

Passing the threshold and fitness tests will be linked to pay and keeping your job. If the recommendations are implemented we will have some Constables who are stuck under the threshold test, and the select few in jobs which allow them to pass the specialist skills threshold test. How is this fair?

The current CRTP is linked to a test. This is modern and forward-thinking, as it rewards good work from career-Constables, and keeps them motivated to perform regardless of the mix of skills they hold. It recognises that all Constables' skills are valued, and of value to the Police Service and the communities we serve. The smoke and mirrors regarding the shortening of the Constables' pay scale is amazing. Winsor ignores the point at which CRTP can be achieved altogether, and by our calculations you are worse off despite the shortening of the scale, even if you jump through all his hoops. How is this fair?

I could go on, but I think it best to also look to what is fair to the public. When the public need us, they want an omni-competent can-do Constable, who can deal with their enquiries and provide a variety of services and assistance. This is the very definition of a 21st century professional Constable. It is disappointing that the public have yet to be considered or consulted when such fundamental changes are being proposed to their Police Service.

Winsor Part 1 was enough of a body blow to policing and undermined the future of the service by imposing the incremental pay freeze on young-in-service Constables. If fully implemented, Winsor 2 will be a knife in the back, and a betrayal of every Police Constable who joined the service, and committed their lives in return for a fair deal from Government.

It will also prove to be a betrayal of the public, who deserve far more than the weakened and under-resourced shell of a Police Service.

ACPO should be very worried; they are presiding over the demise of the Service. They should be doing everything they can to protect their communities, not sitting at PNB and blindly supporting Winsor. Constables and our communities need to be told clearly what is ACPO's vision for policing for the next five years? Sir Hugh, is it any different from the Government's vision?

These warnings may seem stark and foreboding, but we must be as clear and candid as possible at this critical time: there can be no doubt that if Winsor 2 is pushed through untested, it will have a profound and deleterious effect on the professional lives of every Constable. If these changes are made, it will weaken our capability to the extent that the Police Service is not fit for purpose. It will reduce the levels of solved crimes, Police visibility, emergency response times, and compromise the integrity of the Police Service as a whole.

More and more frequently, our overstretched and under-resourced forces will get there just a little too late to stop the domestic violence incident escalating, or there will be too few Constables on the frontline to stop the riot from growing and spreading.

It cannot be fair to anyone if we let this happen.

We ask the government to hear our voices, and listen to the serious concerns expressed by 102,000 Constables on the impact and consequences of implementing the Winsor 2. We are the voices of the frontline, and represent the skill, knowledge and understanding which only come from hands-on experience.

Constables remain committed to working with government to ensure that we continue to be *the finest police service in the world*.

Today, we need to hear assurances that the Government will work with us to properly value and trust the 102,000 Constables who serve and protect our communities.

Minister we all want policing to succeed, for this to happen we must work together, listen to our communities and value the office of Constable.

Thank you.

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