

A Consultation on the Future of Policing in Scotland



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership (CPP)

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/

Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. How could police reform improve services and the delivery of outcomes?

(Please note that the police representatives on Argyll and Bute Community Planning Partnership have been pleased to support a joint CPP response to this consultation but their views are not represented within the Q&As in order to ensure there is no bias in the response.)

It is important that a balance is struck between achieving national and local outcomes. Improvements to deliver national outcomes should not be at the expense of achieving local outcomes. A robust and well thought out approach of what we expect as outcomes for the future policing of our area is an essential ingredient of any national structural changes. Therefore, any reform should be outcome focused and not focussed around structures.

2. What do you think are the greatest opportunities and challenges facing policing in Scotland today and how do you think they should be addressed?

The financial position of the public sector including the police force is the greatest single challenge because if this is not addressed then their ability to deliver the services that people rely on will be undermined. Other challenges include the increasing demands at a time of significant reducing resources and uncertainty.

In Argyll and Bute, given our geographic spread in sparse, remote and island communities, it is important to us that we have a police service that polices the whole of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) area in an efficient and prioritised way. This does not mean that this should lead to reductions in services in Argyll and Bute. There is an important element of community safety around a visible presence of police and the need to maintain sufficient levels of cover to respond to incidents. There is also the key challenge of being placed within communities so that police officers gain local intelligence and they are also seen as having a connection with the local community. The very best policing models have a level of integration between the local police and the community where with mutual respect the need for reactive policing can be reduced. It is clear that the CPP would be opposed to any significant reductions in police numbers in Argyll and Bute.

The main forum for discussing the future of policing in Scotland should be the ongoing work of the Christie Commission, which is looking at overall public sector reform. This work must be coordinated in order to ensure that any restructuring of public services is considered in the round and to ensure that the cross agency impact of proposed restructures are fully considered before any changes are implemented. It is essential to ensure that the focus is on 'outcomes for the people of Scotland' and not on restructuring for the sake of restructuring. There are significant opportunities in looking at reform across the public sector as a whole.

Other opportunities include building on the success already achieved

through effective performance and effective partnership working. In Argyll and Bute, police performance has been good and further improving and we would wish to ensure that any future reform would build on this success.

There are additional challenges and potential tensions between the needs of communities at a local level and the national or strategic need for specialist policing, such as in counter terrorism.

3. How can partnership working between the police and other organisations be improved?

In Argyll and Bute there is already a very strong link between the local Divisional Commander and senior council officers. This has been reinforced over many years by the LALO relationship between the police and the council and this has been of benefit to both organisations. Strathclyde Police and Argyll and Bute Council have generally worked in consensus across a wide range of sometimes contentious issues. It would be important that any change to policing arrangements in Scotland would not undermine that close relationship.

The Argyll and Bute CPP is supportive of the current Strathclyde model and if amalgamation of police forces were to go ahead, Argyll and Bute would wish to remain linked with Strathclyde in any future set up. The rationale behind this relates to the planning and management of potential incidents relating to the six hazardous sites in Argyll and Bute. The geographical proximity to and close working relationship with partners in this area is a key element of civil contingency planning as is the scale of specialist resource that is available in the Strathclyde area.

Communication between partners and communities could be improved and perhaps more could be done to help communities understand police policy.

The partnership approach through Community Planning is developing, with some good results at local community planning group level. Continued work on this with better engagement will bring positive results. It is important not to lose the momentum gained by Community Planning.

4. How can the police better engage with communities to help them be more resilient and self-reliant?

The Police already contribute to Community Planning and Local Area Community Planning in Argyll and Bute and it is important that all public sector partners contribute to this as that will provide an efficiency for public agencies and also assist in managing the level of required attendance from voluntary groups who find it increasingly difficult to respond across a range of consultation issues from public authorities.

Local Community Planning in Argyll and Bute brings all of these interested parties together in a cohesive way and to minimise the time required to effectively engage. In Argyll and Bute, we would seek to build on this good practice as a partnership to ensure that all agencies effectively engage with

communities to facilitate resilience and self reliance.

More local accountability, improved local communication and stronger local presence would further build on the effective community engagement arrangements already in place.

5. What arrangements and relationships do you think would lead to the greatest improvements in national and local accountability?

A distinction should be made between specialist and community policing with community policing managed at a local level ensuring local accountability and specialist policing managed at a regional or national level with regional or national accountability. The CPP would therefore be supportive of the amalgamation of some specialist roles e.g. training, scientific, terrorism, drug enforcement, fraud, e-crime, people trafficking, and serious organised crime.

Local policing should be accountable to local government / CPP. It is important that local Councillors have an input into decisions on policing and the resources applied to that for their area. It is also important that the detail of how budgets would be decided upon for a National Police Force or the Regional Police Forces is negotiated with councils also. At the moment Local Authorities are able to assess and input into the budget requirements for their police and weight this against other priorities for their area. There may be a concern that if a National Police force was established the cost of running the police may be topsliced to the detriment of Local Government and other local public authorities and we should be clear that we would not support such an arrangement should the national model be implemented.

It is also clear that for local accountability to be effective there needs to be a person responsible for a CPP area within the Police Force who is accountable to the local area in a meaningful way. It will be of little benefit if the local authority / CPP simply has a liaison or consultative role if there is no duty on the police to take on board that which they receive from such a process.

6. Do you agree that change is necessary to protect frontline services?

Yes No Don't know

The focus of change should be on outcomes and police roles and not simply a costly structure change. However, it is clear that with a restriction in resources there is a risk of loss of front line services which communities depend upon and therefore it can be argued that creating greater efficiencies in the back office and reducing management costs would release more resources to front line duty.

7. Which option do you think should be pursued and why?

A single Scottish police force

- A rationalised regional force model**
- Retain eight forces with increased collaboration**
- Other (please specify)**
- Don't know**

This is a difficult question with no straight forward answer and with political implications. Argyll and Bute Council is clearly of the view that there should not be a single police force for Scotland, although this is not necessarily the view of all community planning partners. If ultimately a National Force were to be established there would be an absolute necessity to ensure local accountability from that national body so that there is clear demonstration of grass roots contact and engagement. It is difficult to assess whether the arguments in this respect are correct but it is logical that the smaller the force, the more effective it would be in grass roots engagement with communities. It is clearly important that whatever local accountability arrangements are in place there must be the ability to direct and spend resources towards priorities agreed by the CPP area and the local council.

However, on the other hand, from Argyll and Bute's point of view, a network of regional forces were implemented with Strathclyde remaining as one region, Argyll and Bute would maintain the already positive and effective links it has with the Strathclyde force. Should a regional approach be taken forward for delivery on local community planning outcomes, it is suggested that local and community planning policing policy be devolved to local authority or some other local arrangement that integrates with community planning.

In line with the above comment, the current working arrangements between Argyll and Bute and Strathclyde Police work particularly well. Whether or not the police forces are nationalised or regionalised is not the key issue for Argyll and Bute. The important issue is that the area does not want to lose the current level of provision, the support and positive working arrangements that are currently in place under either of the above structures.

As stated previously, it is important that any reorganisation of the police is considered within the framework of wider public sector reform.

8. How could we best improve accountability, deliver efficiencies and deliver service improvements at local and national levels?

It is important that the Scottish Government develops a clear national strategy for policing objectives that could be measured by Government to ensure that strategically Police Forces in Scotland whether they be one or four are meeting the demands of the Government. Below that the

Community Planning arrangements would allow for a policing plan for the local community planning area to be submitted and agreed locally. As part of this, a governance arrangement that is truly local and accountable to communities is essential. It is important that there is clear separation of national specialist roles from local roles and there must be national KPIs identified for these. Local outcomes must be determined by CPP and communities and captured in the SOA.

9. Do you have any views on how the process of change should be approached, including the extent and pace of change within a given option?

Representatives from COSLA should be involved in the planning and detailed arrangements for any proposed change to ensure that local accountability, which is paramount for community policing, is retained. Again, integration with the work of the Christie Commission on public sector reform is critical to approaching any changes to policing. Continual liaison with Community Planning Partnerships will ensure that a wide range of local interests are represented and taken into account during the change process. In turn and as part of this approach, ongoing consultation with and involvement of local communities is essential.

10. To assist with our Equality Impact Assessment on the reform, please describe any equality issues (in relation to race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender people and religion) relevant to each of the options.

The CPP is not aware of any significant equality issues that would arise as a result of any of the options being implemented.

11. To assist with our Regulatory Impact Assessment, please describe any financial or other impacts for business, charities and the voluntary sector relevant to each of the options.

It is obviously difficult to assess at the moment but any loss of local police facilities could have an adverse effect on the local economy as a result of the servicing of premises and the placing of staff within a local community that support local businesses and facilities. The rural and island nature of Argyll and Bute, combined with the narrow economic base has resulted in a higher than average dependence on public sector jobs. Any reduction in police related employment as a result of a restructuring would have a disproportionate economic impact on our small communities.

12. Do you think there needs to be any change to the existing roles and responsibilities of the key bodies responsible for policing?

The roles of the key bodies involved in policing will require to be adjusted to take account of what proposals are eventually developed for the modernisation of policing.

Argyll and Bute CPP is keen to ensure that policing is still delivered locally by officers who live within the local community and have a commitment to it. The resources to be directed to Argyll and Bute should be assessed by an

officer with command responsibility for the area and with the ability to direct resources appropriately. It is important that the police continue to support Local Community Planning and close working with the council and other public agencies. The police service is a vital service for remote communities and will often be the first responder to emergencies co-ordinating and summoning other blue light services to complex incidents. Argyll and Bute CPP would not wish to see any of this undermined.

Please email this response form to policereform@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or you can post it to :

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