

Report to the Thames Valley Police & Crime Panel

Title: Summary of Home Affairs
Committee Report into Policing for
the Future

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Panel



Reasons for the Report

The Police and Crime Commissioner is asked for his view on the recently published Home Affairs Committee report on “Policing for the Future”, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/515/515.pdf>, which urged the Government to prioritise policing in the Autumn Budget and the next Comprehensive Spending Review, warning that without additional funding for policing, there will be dire consequences for public safety and criminal justice.

The wide-ranging report looked at the changing demands on policing and the Home Affairs Committee found that forces are struggling to cope in the face of changing and rising crimes, as a result of falling staff numbers, outdated technology, capabilities, structures, fragmentation and a failure of Home Office leadership.

The report recommends major changes to the police response to new and growing crimes and warns that the Home Office cannot continue to stand back while police forces struggle.

In addition, the Police and Crime Commissioner is also asked for his view on Chief Constable Sara Thornton, Chair of the National Police Chiefs Council’s comments regarding Police focusing on burglary and violent crime and not incidents such as misogyny where no offence has been committed. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-46053069>

Summary of the Home Affairs Committee Report into Policing for the Future

The Committee looked at changing trends in crime and policing and the overarching problems facing the police service in England and Wales, such as funding and investment. Particular attention was given to three specific areas of growing pressure on policing—online fraud, child sexual abuse, and safeguarding vulnerable people; and finally at the wider, cross-cutting reforms that are required.

The inquiry found that police officers across the country continued to perform a remarkable and valuable public service, often in the most exacting of circumstances. However, figures on police welfare painted a picture of a service under serious strain, and the Inquiry concluded that forces were badly overstretched, the number of traditional volume crimes was rising, but the number of detections and charges brought by the police was falling.

Policing was struggling to cope in the face of changing and rising crimes, as a result of falling staff numbers, outdated technology, capabilities and structures, and fragmented leadership and direction. The Inquiry concluded that without significant reform and investment, communities would be increasingly let down.

Main Inquiries Findings:

- Many '**volume**' crimes, including robbery, theft from the person, and vehicle-related theft, have been increasing sharply after a long period of decline. While recorded crimes have risen by 32% in the last three years, the number of charges or summons has decreased by 26%, and the number of arrests is also down.
- **Neighbourhood policing**, which is vital to the service's response to many types of crime, is being eroded. Forces had lost at least a fifth of their neighbourhood policing capacity, on average, since 2010.
- **Without additional funding for policing** there would be consequences for public safety, criminal justice, community cohesion and public confidence. It was strongly recommended that police funding is prioritised in the Autumn Budget and the next Comprehensive Spending Review. The current police funding model was not fit for purpose.

Recommendations:

- Only a small proportion of **online fraud cases** were ever investigated, and the police response to this form of crime was in need of a fundamental restructure, with investigations undertaken at a national and regional level and local forces focusing on victim support.
- The **private sector must do more** to reduce demand on policing from online fraud and child sexual abuse, and specific recommendations were made about the regulation of internet companies, including those taking insufficient action against indecent images of children.
- Police forces were under-resourced for the number of **online child abuse investigations** they now needed to undertake, and the demands created by the management of registered sex offenders.
- The Government should appoint a **Commissioner for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse** to work across departments and agencies, and who should produce a comprehensive cross-Government strategy on child protection and the prevention of child sexual abuse.
- Forces should be mandated to provide a **minimum two-day training course on mental health** to all officers and police community support officers (PCSOs), and the Government should use the **NHS funding uplift to achieve a significant reduction in the level of police involvement in mental health crisis work.**

Conclusions about the Future of Policing:

- **Forces were failing to meet the challenges of the digital age.** Police forces' investment in and adoption of new technology was suffering from a complete lack of coordination and leadership, which was letting down police officers, who were struggling to do their jobs with out-of-date technology. The Government should urgently cost and scope a national digital exploitation centre for serious crime, in time to account for the required funding in the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

- Policing was suffering from a complete **failure of leadership from the Home Office**. As the lead department for policing, it cannot continue to stand back while crime patterns change so fast that the police struggle to respond. Only a central Government department has the clout to drive national partnerships with organisations such as the NHS or with global internet companies, for example.
- **The Home Office was asked to publish before the end of November a transparent, root-and-branch review of policing**, publishing proposals by the end of February, which should focus on the reallocation of responsibilities and capabilities at a local, regional and national level. The Government should also set up a National Policing Council—a transparent, policy-making body chaired by the Home Secretary—and a National Policing Assembly, comprising all police and crime commissioners (PCCs) and chief constables.