

# EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET: 4 MAY 2011

## CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF POLICING IN SCOTLAND

### Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

#### 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the key principles of the Consultation issued by the Scottish Government on the Future of Policing in Scotland and to seek approval of the Council's proposed response to the Consultation.

#### 2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 The Consultation on the Future of Policing in Scotland was published on 12 February 2011 with responses requested by 5 May 2011. Given that this date coincides with the Scottish Parliamentary elections, it is anticipated that consultation activities will extend beyond this date.

- 2.2 The Consultation focuses on three options for the future structure of police services in Scotland, namely:

- Option A – a single Scottish police force
- Option B – a rationalised regional force model
- Option C – retain the existing eight forces with increased collaboration

- 2.3 Each of the options are considered against the following key criteria:

- Service improvement and the delivery of better outcomes at local and national levels;
- Accountability to, and close engagement with, local communities in every part of Scotland, and
- The delivery of efficiencies while protecting frontline services as far as possible.

- 2.4 The Consultation indicates that any structural changes agreed following the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary elections would not be realised until approximately April 2013, with the scope and nature of the changes determining any future transition programme.

- 2.5 The consultation invites responses to 12 specific questions. The proposed response to these questions is set out in the Appendix to this report, for consideration by Cabinet.

2.6 A copy of the full Consultation paper is available from the Members' portal.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The future financial and resource challenges facing the public sector are acknowledged and generally understood. The consultation on police services is being considered alongside the broader public reform reviews that are also taking place, including the Christie Commission and a separate consultation on the future of Fire and Rescue Services in Scotland.

3.2 Policing in Scotland costs approximately £1.4 billion per annum. It has been estimated that c. £150m (more than 10% of Budgets) could accrue from a reorganisation of the police service.

### **4. PROPOSED CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

4.1 The proposed response to the Consultation is attached as an Appendix to this report. In summary, whilst a strong case has been made for the reform of police services, a number of issues remain that require to be further considered and assessed before a final position could be taken on a preferred option relating to organisational structures, namely:

- The protection of locality policing and frontline services;
- Maintaining positive outcomes for local communities, and
- Governance arrangements that protect local democratic accountability.

#### **Protection of Locality Policing and Frontline Services**

4.2 It is considered that the consultation does not establish that structural change will protect frontline services. For instance, the projected savings from a single force model assume a substantial reduction in jobs, including police posts. Of the £153m savings identified, £68m relates to police staff and £52m relates to police officers. It is hard to see how this will not have an adverse impact on frontline services.

#### **Maintaining Positive Outcomes for Local Communities**

4.3 Whilst it is accepted that reform of police services in Scotland provides an opportunity to improve services at some levels, improvement and the continued delivery of outcomes at a local level have still to be demonstrated.

4.4 At a national level, the case is well put that a single force model would bring benefits in respect of some of the key policing challenges facing Scotland. It is acknowledged that the new threats that have emerged in recent years such as serious organised crime, international terrorism, complex fraud, e-crime and people trafficking transcend existing force and national boundaries and require a more sophisticated policing response. To date, these threats have

been addressed to some extent by the creation of national organisations such as the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency, but the core issue is that the relationship between these organisations and the existing police forces is unnecessarily complex. A single force model could bring clarity of purpose and more effectively define roles and responsibilities in these critical areas.

- 4.5 However, the potential impact on the delivery of improved outcomes at a local level is less clear. The consultation paper does not make it clear how structural change would protect the delivery of positive outcomes for local communities. For instance, there has been no apparent consideration of the risk that existing local partnership working will be lost, damaged or hampered under a different structure, or of how a single police force would effectively respond to the local agenda and the demands of partnership working.

### **Governance Arrangements and Local Democratic Accountability**

- 4.6 It is considered essential that local democracy and accountability is maintained at the heart of any reform process and should be enhanced rather than diminished.
- 4.7 Any governance arrangements adopted should not introduce unnecessary layers of bureaucracy that would negate some of the efficiency savings that would accrue from structural change. Beyond references to models adopted in other countries, there is no assessment or analysis of costs associated with a preferred Governance arrangement for any of the options proposed in the consultation.
- 4.8 The key issue here, as recognised in the consultation, is that the police service discharges its functions across both national and local contexts and, accordingly, the balance of accountability needs to reflect that. The current arrangements for local accountability through Joint Boards and CPPs achieve that, but there needs to be consideration of how it would be affected by any structural reform.

## **5. FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no financial, legal or risk implications arising directly from this report.

## **6. COMMUNITY PLAN / POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The East Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership is responding separately to the consultation.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Notes the key principles set out in the Consultation issued by the Scottish Government on the Future of Policing in Scotland;
2. Considers and approves the proposed response to the Consultation as detailed in the Appendix to the report;
3. Remits the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to submit the final response to the Scottish Government by the due date, and
4. Agrees that, given the timescales involved, this matter be excluded from the call-in procedure, in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Elizabeth Morton

**Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

**27 April 2010**

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Scottish Government Consultation on the Future of Policing in Scotland dated February 2011

Any person wishing further information should contact Iain Tough, Corporate Business Manager, Chief Executive's Office (Telephone 01563 576575)

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