



Home Office

HOME SECRETARY
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To all Chief Constables

22 July 2011

Dear Chief Constable

POLICE INTEGRITY AND PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

I am writing to you following several turbulent weeks during which the Police Service and its relationships with the media has come under intense scrutiny as part of the Parliamentary and public concern about the activities of certain elements of the media in illegally accessing personal information and the relationship between the media and the police.

While the focus has been on the Metropolitan Police Service, I recognise that for the very many dedicated and hardworking police officers and staff across the country, as well as in the MPS, this will have been an unsettling and disturbing period.

The actions which the Prime Minister and I have announced in recent weeks seek to address these issues and to ensure that the lessons are learned for the future. I thought it would be helpful to set out the various strands of that work briefly.

First, on 6 July, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Public Inquiry. The Inquiry, to be headed by Lord Justice Leveson, will be statutory so that witnesses may be summoned to give evidence under oath. Terms of reference for the Inquiry can be read in full at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/leveson-inquiry-panel-terms-of-reference/>.

I have also asked the Independent Police Complaints Commission to report to me on its experience of investigating corruption in the Police Service and any lessons that can be learned for the Police Service.

As I noted in my statement to the House of Commons on 18 July the current allegations of police corruption are not, unfortunately, the only recent example of alleged corruption in the police. I have therefore asked Sir Denis O'Connor to consider instances of undue influence, inappropriate contractual arrangements and other abuses of power in police relationships with the media and other parties and make recommendations to me about what needs to be done.

I also informed the House on 18 July that Elizabeth Filkin, the former Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, has provisionally agreed to examine the ethical considerations that should, in future, underpin the relationships between the Metropolitan Police Service and the media, how to ensure maximum transparency and public confidence, and provide advice. The new leadership team of the MPS, under Acting Commissioner Tim Godwin, has my full support in meeting the challenges it faces over the coming weeks and months.

Neither the IPCC nor HMIC work that I have commissioned, nor indeed Elizabeth Filkin's, is intended to pre-empt the outcome of Lord Justice Leveson's Inquiry. But it is important that we ensure that any lessons that can be applied now are identified sooner rather than later.

Beyond that we need to build on our work to look at police culture and leadership. Obviously we have been considering what changes are needed in leadership, training and development but there is now a very clear case for greater openness and stronger corporate governance. It is essential to make changes in order to restore public confidence in the integrity of policing. I regard your engagement as essential, and plan to hold a meeting with all Chief Constables in the autumn which will include consideration of these matters.

As you know, Tom Winsor is already looking at a number of relevant issues including entry routes into policing in the second part of his Review and I do urge ACPO to feed new ideas into the Winsor Review.

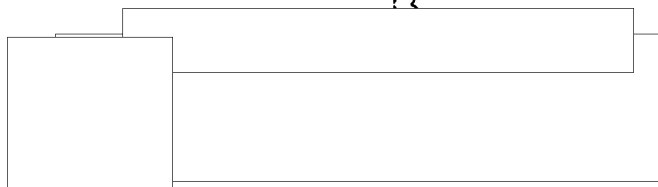
I also wish to re-iterate in the strongest terms the Prime Minister's commitment that the Government will never compromise the operational independence of the police. During the debate on 20 July he re-affirmed the commitment I made to you, at the ACPO conference, about the importance of ensuring that the police service remains led by effective and strong leaders and that the leadership is held to account through the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners.

We have responded to your concerns that there needs to be clarity over how this accountability relationship will work, and we have worked with you to produce a draft Protocol. Based on your feedback, I also intend to take a power for me, as Secretary of State, to issue a Protocol to both PCCs and Chief Constables.

Nick Herbert and I are committed to working with you to ensure that all that needs to be done will be done so that we not only apply the lessons learned through recent events to strengthen police integrity further and maintain public confidence, but that we also look to future challenges.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of Police Authorities.

Yours sincerely

A large rectangular area of the document is redacted with a white box, obscuring the signature and any text below it.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP