

**KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FULL COUNCIL MEETING 20<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2005**

**FUTURE POLICING IN SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE**

**REPORT BY BRAD FLEET, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform Members of the proposed reconfiguration of the police forces and to provide Members with an opportunity to comment.

**2.0 FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct staffing and financial considerations.

**3.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications

**4.0 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct risk implications, although any change may affect the way this authority works with the police in the future.

**5.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Home Secretary has asked all Chief Constables and Police Authorities to review the current structure of the police service in England and Wales and consider options for change. He is concerned that the current force structure is not 'fit for purpose' for dealing with serious crime and terrorism. The Wiltshire Police Authority, together with the Chief Constable and neighbouring Police Authorities, is considering options for change in the South West Region and has consulted the District Council.

**6.0 BACKGROUND**

In September of this year the Home Secretary wrote to Constabularies and Police Authorities to ask forces to consider options for change in order to address the perceived gap in respect of the provision of protective services – those parts of police work that deals with major crime, serious and organised crime, counter terrorism, civil contingencies, critical incidents, public order and roads policing.

A joint response was submitted to the Home Office in respect of the Wiltshire Constabulary listing a number of options for change these being:

- For Wiltshire to remain as a stand alone force but to generate extra resources for fighting serious crime and terrorism through collaboration and partnership arrangements with police and other agencies
- To join with Avon and Somerset and Gloucestershire
- To join with Avon and Somerset , Gloucestershire and Dorset
- To join with Gloucestershire and Dorset
- To 'federate' with Gloucestershire and Dorset by working more closely together and by combining some operations and back office resources
- A strategic amalgamation of the resources of the regions five forces

In early November the Home Office replied setting out the options that they assess as being suitable for 'further progression' within the region. These are:

- Two strategic forces – Devon and Cornwall as a stand alone force, and a merger of Avon and Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset as the other strategic force
- A regional strategic south west force

Both options could have profound implications, not only for policing in our area but also for how organisations work together in Wiltshire.

The Force was asked to submit a further interim report by the end of November, with a final report on a preferred option to the Home Office by the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2005. In order to formulate their response the Constabulary and the Police Authority embarked on a consultation process to gather as many views as possible from stakeholders and strategic partners.

In light of the short time table the Leader of the Council has replied setting out his own views and concerns. His letter, which officers consider covers their own concerns, is attached as an annex to this report.

This report to full Council now provides an opportunity for Members to note the letter's content and if they wish to send one from the District Council endorsing those views, expanding on them or presenting additional or alternative ones.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

The Home Office is currently considering change in the way Forces are set up across the country in order to fill gaps identified in the provision of protective services. For the South West the Home Office has indicated that there are only two options to consider both of which will impact on policing in the Kennet area.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended:

1. That members note the content of the report and the proposals set out by the Home Office with respect to future policing in Wiltshire
2. That a letter be sent to the Chief Constable supporting the points made by the Leader of the Council in his letter. Alternatively, Members may wish to send a letter expressing different or additional views.

**Background Papers**

None

A J Bradley  
December 2005