

CELG(4)-10-11 : Paper 4

**Submission from South Wales Police to
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

**Following report from GMB Union to CELG(4)-04-11 : Paper 6
Inquiry into Community Safety in Wales**

This report provides a response to the five points detailed on Page 61 of the above GMB submission to the committee. The material contained has been circulated widely to Officers and Staff as part of our internal consultation with employees. This information has been previously disclosed and discussed with Unions and Staff Associations. GMB have been party to these discussions and as such this information has already been made available to them.

Context

The Force faces a £47m gap in funding over the next four years, with 80 per cent of these grant reductions required within the first two years between 2011 and 2013. This report provides a summary of the relevant considerations regarding the change programme currently being undertaken by South Wales Police in response to budgetary reductions.

The reduction in funding to the Police Service and specifically South Wales Police is of a magnitude unprecedented in living memory. The impact these reductions could have on both the community and South Wales Police personnel are significant as such many options were considered before embarking on the change programme, however the available choices were limited and to do nothing was not an option.

On appointment as Chief Constable of South Wales Police in January 2010, Chief Constable Peter Vaughan set up the Reform programme to fundamentally review the way in which the force delivered its service and to ensure its structure was fit for the challenge of delivering our Mission of 'Keeping South Wales Safe' and the vision of 'Being the best at understanding and responding to our communities needs'.

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Following the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010 the programme also became the lead on delivering the Value for Money plan to meet the anticipated budget shortfalls.

Fundamental to this programme is a comprehensive and detailed 'Lean' based review of processes across the organisation over the four years of the Comprehensive Spending Review. With the balance of reductions being of the order of 80% in the first two years, it was clear that the organisation was required to focus on those opportunities where the maximum savings could be achieved, while providing a more efficient and effective service for our communities.

The plan put in place clearly delivers this requirement but also includes the Chief Constable's personal commitment that wherever possible frontline service should be protected and if possible enhanced. This does not mean that frontline posts will remain unaffected, whether they are officers or police staff but more importantly focuses on reducing bureaucracy, streamlining our processes and focusing resources on delivering a better, more efficient service.

In an organisation which spends approximately 80% of its budget on people it is clear that to meet funding reductions there would be a need to reduce payroll expenditure and this reduction has been spread across both Officers and police staff. In making these reductions Chief Officers and managers have been conscious of the fact that we have employees who have given many years loyal and committed service to the force and remain steadfast in ensuring everything practicable is done to ensure they leave with dignity. This has included focusing on vacancy management to minimise the number placed 'at risk' and when appropriate offering early voluntary retirement and voluntary redundancy. In the vast majority of cases staff have been redeployed from redundant posts into other roles, providing them with both the training and support they need. In addition support has been provided to those staff leaving to facilitate moving forward when they leave the service.

In respect of police officers we have concentrated on reducing the number of officers in non operational posts; protecting the frontline. This work is being lead by senior operational police officers and is focused on ensuring we maintain visibility and

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quality of service at a local level and where appropriate merging specialist resources to capitalise on the benefits of new technology and economies of scale. This includes significant opportunities arising from developing new collaborative ventures with colleagues in Gwent and Dyfed-Powys to deliver cost effective specialist services on a regional basis.

The Development of the Public Service Centre

Call and Incident Management Staff Reductions

Project Reform Public Service Centre was introduced to streamline and improve the service we provide to the communities of South Wales and develop a “One Stop Shop” ethos. This vision was determined by a Project team and staff from the respective business area. The processes and systems that have resulted from this redesign have identified that a reduction in staff to provide the service is appropriate and has been developed using agreed and tested principles.

The reduction in staff and the implementation of this project are robustly governed in that the Project team report to Chief Officers weekly and a full project review will be presented to the South Wales Police Authority in December 2011 for scrutiny. This intrusive level of governance ensures that the project reaches key milestones before proceeding to the next phase and South Wales Police continue to deliver a professional service to its communities. Any resource reduction against current and future process need to be seen in a far broader context than purely historical comparisons as the Public Service Centre is operating in partnership with a new local policing model and therefore process management and demand have significantly been altered, again facilitating the reduction in staff levels.

Switchboard and Auto Attendant

South Wales Police have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders prior to agreeing to deliver an automated switchboard and the overall view of those consulted was that this was an appropriate and necessary organisational development and one which was somewhat overdue in streamlining our service

delivery. Certain aspects of the automation were seen as vital to customer service including the Welsh Language option and a default position for callers to automatically speak with a call handler if they became confused or did not identify the correct option. The auto attendant pilot phase was launched in September with all exchange lines and 101 filtering through the system, whilst being supported with a full switchboard to allow for any modifications.

Technical delivery of the auto attendant did require some modifications initially in call routing, but this was a momentary activity in the overall call handling profile and did not affect our emergency call handling provision. The switchboard strength has now reduced to 12 and the auto attendant supports the majority of telephony for the force. As with all technical interventions early adjustments were required but the auto attendant is operating to the predicted levels and call routing is functioning very effectively. The impact during the technical modifications has been minimal and our communities have not voiced any concern. There have been no complaints recorded as a consequence of this change process. To ensure we are listening to our communities and customers we are consulting daily with victims and callers to further develop and enhance the service we provide.

A performance outcome of the auto attendant implementation is that our overall call abandonment rate (the proportion of waiting callers hanging up before speaking with an operator) has reduced, demonstrating the benefits of the automated system and Public Service Centre process.

Project Consultation

A range of consultation forums were organised both internal and external using a variety of methods, this included market research surveys at key locations across the force area, effective use of social media and a number of community focus events drawing diverse members of our communities together to observe their views and opinions.

South Wales Police visited or received visits from approximately 10 of the 43 forces including the Police Service of Northern Ireland. A number of the forces were within

our Most Similar Force (MSF) grouping. What was evident is that the Call and Incident Management model within each force was different to our own and therefore the approach to this aspect of business varied. The forces consulted experienced different challenges and opportunities in the reform of their call handling and public service processes within their organisations. The South Wales Police Public Service Centre model and implementation has considered these points and built the findings into the redesign and ongoing development. The external MSF consultation is ongoing and forms part of the continuous improvement ethos that South Wales Police support allowing the structure and process of the Public Service Centre to continually evolve.

Public Service Centre Multi Skilled Call Handlers

The vision and design aim of the Public Service Centre is to deliver a “One Stop Shop” facility for the communities of South Wales and this will be supported by utilising staff that have a range of call handling skills from dealing with emergencies to providing information and also less urgent enquiries. It is incumbent on any public organisation to ensure that when we provide a service we deliver it at the first point of contact as often as possible. This is the premise of the Public Service Centre which moves away from the current, less efficient position; where the initial call taker may not be the person who deals with the enquiry. The delivery of such a service could never be a simple transition due to the significant training requirement and the maintenance of daily service delivery to a high standard. To date all staff have received the required IT training, and additional development in the form of tutorship and supported on-the-job learning to broaden skills is ongoing.

The most recent force performance data for October 2011 indicated that the call handling target for 999 calls was maintained at 98% and non-emergency call handling at 92%; demonstrating closely matched performance with that evidenced prior to the auto attendant and recent reforms being implemented.

Station Enquiry Clerks

The Project objective and vision has been to “place the citizen at the centre of everything we do and develop a department that is solely public focused”. Presently, Station Enquiry Clerks carry out a range of administrative tasks that duplicate some functions carried out centrally and take them away from the principal aim of dealing with public callers. The role provided by these dedicated staff is vital to our communities but over time has become blurred. The Project has been designed to deliver against the objective by employing a systematic approach and focus on process improvement.

A period of analysis was introduced to this vital business area examining foot fall, call levels and the role of staff at enquiry counters. The analysis stage has only recently concluded and the findings are of interest but have only started to determine what the future for enquiry desk functions will be. The Station Enquiry Clerk Reform programme has now entered the redesign phase and at the conclusion of this and following BCU and Staff Consultation the design will be presented to the Police Authority for consideration.

As GMB indicate on page 62 of their submission the project has not ruled out the closure or reduction in hours of the front desk at certain stations. Any change in station processes will be based on evidence and the demand from communities for service. It cannot be the best use of resources to staff station counters on a 24/7 basis when they receive 4 or 5 visits per week and a handful of phone calls as the demand would simply not justify the response.

Impact on the communities of South Wales

The provision of an emergency and non emergency call handling service to the public is of paramount importance and this is recognised by South Wales Police together with the risks attached to any change. With a view to this the force has invested in a dedicated Project team who have applied a range of design and systems methodologies to deliver the redesign of the Public Service Centre.

The confidence and reassurance required with such a large scale project is evidenced in the return to call handling normality and a performance level that

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replicates call handling prior to the introduction of the auto attendant. South Wales Police are conscious that the programme to deliver the Public Service Centre is a unique undertaking for the force but it is designed to deliver a first class service with highly trained and professional staff and the application of the latest technology to the benefit of the communities of South Wales.

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