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Friday, 11 November 2005

HOME OFFICE

Police Force

Structures Review

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Clarke): Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMIC) report, "Closing the Gap", published in September 2005 concluded that the current 43 force structure in England and Wales was no longer "fit for purpose". The report recommended that the best business solution was for the police service to reconfigure based on strategic forces of sufficient size to provide both effective neighbourhood policing and protective services to combat serious organised crime and terrorism.

Following the publication of the HMIC report, the Home Secretary asked all police forces and authorities to consider the best options for their region and to submit them to him by 23 December 2005. The first stage in this process was for police forces and police authorities to develop by the end of October short listed options for each region. This stage has now been completed and feedback has been provided to all chief officers and chairs of police authorities indicating which proposals appear to be most favourable for each of the nine Government Office regions in England and for Wales. The options identified for further development are set out below, although authorities are still free to develop alternative options alongside these.

In recommending particular options, the arguments put forward by forces and authorities have been carefully considered along with the need to create a balanced and resilient policing landscape across the whole of England and Wales. Neighbourhood and Basic Command Unit (BCU) level policing remain the essential local face of the police service, and by ensuring greater resilience and capability in our police service we will help maintain this service, whilst at the same time strengthening the capacity to deal with serious and organised crimes, major incidents and counter-terrorism.

Forces and authorities are now being asked to complete a cost benefit analysis for all of their short listed options. They will then develop a business case and initial implementation plans for their recommended option to be submitted to the Home Secretary.

The Secretary of State for Transport announced in a written statement on 11 October that, in the context of this review, he would be reviewing separately the role of the British Transport Police (BTP) Proposals for the British Transport Police will be brought forward, if appropriate, once the outcome of that review is known.

My right honourable Friend the Minister of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety (Ms Hazel Blears) has written to all Parliamentary colleagues on this matter inviting them to join the consultation process.

Options assessed at this stage as suitable for progression

South East	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Two strategic forces: Kent, Surrey and Sussex; Thames Valley and Hampshire2. Three strategic forces: Kent; Thames Valley; Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire3. Three strategic forces: Kent, Surrey and Sussex; Thames Valley; Hampshire4. Three strategic forces: Kent and Sussex; Thames Valley; Hampshire and Surrey5. Four strategic forces: Kent; Thames Valley; Surrey and Sussex; Hampshire
South West	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional South West force2. Two strategic forces: Devon and Cornwall; Avon and Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset
West Midlands	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional West Midlands force2. Two strategic forces: Staffordshire and West Mercia; Warwickshire and West Midlands
East Midlands	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional East Midlands force2. Two strategic forces: Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire; Leicestershire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire
Eastern	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional Eastern force2. Two strategic forces: Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex; Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire3. Two strategic forces: Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex; Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire
Yorkshire and Humberside	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional Yorkshire and Humberside force2. Two strategic forces: West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire; South Yorkshire and Humberside
North East	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Regional North East force
North West	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Three strategic forces: Lancashire and Cumbria; Cheshire and Merseyside; Greater Manchester Police2. Two strategic forces: Lancashire, Cumbria and Merseyside; Cheshire and Greater Manchester Police

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| Wales | 1. National Wales force |
| London | 1. Strategic force: Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London
2. Collaboration between the Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London |
| BTP | 1. Proposals for the British Transport Police will be brought forward, if appropriate, once the outcome of the current DfT review is known |