

The Authority has a statutory duty to inform and consult the public in order to ensure that the police service is efficient and effective.

In relation to the proposals for Police & Crime Commissioners, the Authority's principal concerns are that:-

What's the difference?

Many of the proposals made are already within the gift of police authorities such as setting the police budget, hiring and firing the Chief Constable and setting policing priorities after listening to public opinion. Police Authorities have done an excellent job in improving the governance of policing since their inception in 1995. According to the most recent British Crime Survey, crime is at its lowest for three decades.

Costs

The election process alone is estimated to cost £1.2 million in Cheshire in the same year as the Coalition Government requires the Authority to make £9.5m cost savings for policing.

Timing

PCCs will be introduced in May 2012, in a period when the Authority is charged with making over £10m savings. The public want cash spent on Constables not Commissioners.

Less visible policing may suffer

The less visible elements of policing such as tackling serious and organised crime or domestic abuse may suffer as they may not be areas of priority for the PCC as they will not win re-election votes.

Representing local communities

How will one individual ensure that they represent the views of over a million people in Cheshire and not just those who supported them at election? There is little evidence locally that the public want changes to the governance of policing – only 9% of respondents in a recent local survey felt that direct elections would make the Authority more representative of the local community. Why should people turn out to vote for a single PCC when they already vote for 9 of their existing 17 Authority Members?

Politicising policing

There is a real risk that the new proposals will create conflict between Chief Constables and Commissioners and potentially politicise policing.

There is potential that a PCC may have extremist political views. This could create tension and conflict between the Chief Constable and Commissioner.

Police and Crime Panel

There is concern that the Panel responsible for 'scrutinising' the decisions of the Commissioner has no 'teeth', no ability to effectively challenge decisions and will increase bureaucracy.

Confidence in policing

The reduction in Independent Members on the Police and Crime Panel increases the risk of a lack of diverse representation in police governance and, this could adversely affect public confidence in the police service.