



**HERTFORDSHIRE
POLICE AUTHORITY**

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3 April 2006

Dear Colleague

I am writing to inform you of the Police Authority's decision regarding the Home Secretary's proposal to merge Hertfordshire Constabulary with the Forces of Bedfordshire and Essex.

At its meeting on Friday (31st), the Authority rejected any voluntary merger at this time and set out a list of concerns that it would want addressed. The full Authority resolution is attached for your information.

Our decision was not an easy one to make and it followed a morning of detailed discussions between members, the Chief Constable and representatives of the Home Office and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC). There were many strong arguments put forward for a voluntary merger between Hertfordshire, Essex and Bedfordshire, including those put forward by the Chief Constable. His view is that the merger is inevitable and in the best interests of policing in Hertfordshire. However, members were concerned about a number of outstanding issues and voted 10:5 against a voluntary merger.

In particular, they were concerned about the ability to fund such a merger without the cost falling on the Council Tax payer, and about the level of local representation that a larger Strategic Police Authority would provide for the people of Hertfordshire. We also felt the process had been too rushed and that there had been too little public debate on these critical issues.

A letter from the Director General of Crime, Policing and Counter Terrorism, Moira Wallace, received the evening before our meeting, proposed 100% Government funding to cover the costs of restructure, but the figures being quoted by the Home Office fall far short of what we believe to be the true costs. These concerns were supported by our Treasurer and by the Constabulary's Director of Resources.

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In making our decision, we recognise that the Home Secretary is now likely to proceed with an order for a compulsory merger. However, we would still have the option to request a voluntary merger at any time before a Compulsory Order went through Parliament, and we are actively seeking to hold further discussions with the Home Office and HMIC in an attempt to resolve our concerns.

We also hope to meet with colleagues in Bedfordshire and Essex Police Authorities to discuss a way forward. They meet early this week to decide their course of action and we will let you know the outcome as soon as it is available. To enable a voluntary merger of the three forces, all three Authorities would need to agree to submit a request to the Home Secretary.

In the meantime we aim to ensure that in any discussions with the Home Office we address all the concerns that you, our other stakeholders and the public may have.

Our intention, as always, is to protect the interests of the people of Hertfordshire and ensure that they continue to have the most effective and efficient police service to meet their needs.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Ian Laidlaw-Dickson
Chairman

HERTFORDSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION – 31 MARCH 2006

That Hertfordshire Police Authority rejects any form of voluntary merger at this time. In making this decision, the Police Authority recognises that the Home Secretary has the powers to force such a merger. Assuming that the Home Secretary will now proceed and use those powers, the Authority records below the concerns which remain to be addressed. If the Home Secretary exercises his powers, the Authority would expect:

a) Governance

That the resulting Strategic Police Authority (SPA) would consist of as many members as necessary to ensure that all higher level local authorities have one Councillor representative, that the larger local authorities would be reasonably fairly represented based on population or voters and that the Authority would have political proportionality with the whole area it represents. This would result in at least 25 members.

b) Start Up funding

That 100% of the net costs of restructuring (including redundancy and early retirement and any preparatory costs incurred prior to start up) would be met by Central Government and that the calculation of detailed costings making up the net cost be resolved to the satisfaction of the Authority.

c) Protective Services

That further work be undertaken to clarify what an appropriate level of protective services would be and that sufficient resources would be available to the SPA to meet this requirement without reducing the existing planned commitment to neighbourhood policing (in Herts).

d) Funding formula

Timely removal of the funding formula ceiling which would restrict funding to the SPA (In 2006/7 funding is restricted by £8.8m). Also general removal of ring fencing in formula grant.

e) Yarlswood

That any liability for damages claimed by a third party as a result of a fire at Yarlswood Detention Centre in 2002 would not transfer to the SPA.

f) Luton Airport

That the financial burden of policing at Luton Airport would not fall unreasonably (compared with arrangements for other major airports) on the SPA and the communities it would serve and that arrangements for a passenger levy to cover policing at both Luton and Stansted airports be given serious consideration.

g) Local Partnership Working

That external funding by local partners will be ring fenced to enable local agreements to be honoured.

h) Precept

That any additional council tax to achieve the equalisation of precept would be excluded from the calculation of council tax increases for the purposes of the Capping regime.

i) Human Resources

That these issues are resolved in a manner which assures fair treatment for police officers, police staff and police authority staff and allows for efficient and effective policing in Hertfordshire to be maintained and improved.

j) Timing

That a timely process be agreed.

k) Communication

That as a result of a communication exercise with Hertfordshire stakeholders and public to be conducted by June 2006, no new irreconcilable issues are raised.

l) Police Authority Budgets

That the domestic budgets for both the SPA and the precursor authorities be sufficient to allow those authorities to carry out their statutory functions effectively.