

President's Keynote Address

Distinguished guests, Colleagues.

It has been my pleasure as President of the Association of Police Officers in Scotland to host this Annual General Meeting and Conference. Additionally, as the Chief Constable of Northern Constabulary, I have had the added delight of welcoming all of you to the Highlands of Scotland.

I trust that in this short visit, you have managed to sample the flavour and enjoy the hospitality of this part of the world.

In this address, I intend to highlight some of the more notable issues which we have confronted during the course of this year.

Our annual report for 2006/07 describes the wide range of work undertaken by each of our Business areas.

It demonstrates not only the diversity of issues addressed, but also the considerable effort expended by all involved and the degree to which we seek Scottish-wide solutions to the many and varied issues which we progress.

The Police Service in Scotland operates in a society which is subject to ever increasing demand at a time when there is a continual and rapid, demographic change.

The work which is currently being undertaken within the Scottish Police Service has a significant emphasis on reform and modernisation of a service which, in the past, has always been in a position to demonstrate clarity of purpose and flexibility of response.

Today's speakers will reflect a range of views on this particular issue and I am sure they will contribute to our continuing discussions on this pivotal issue.

(The) Chief Constables Council, in November 2005, agreed to undertake an analysis and assessment of the capacity of the Scottish Police Service across the spectrum of protective services, examining the five key work streams of Serious and Organised Crime, Major Crime Investigation, Counter Terrorism, Firearms and Public Order.

A report with specific recommendations was approved by ACPOS members at the meeting of Council in November 2006 and it was recognised that in order to fund and develop specific areas of specialist operational capacity, incremental growth was to be achieved over the next three years.

The review has a strong emphasis on the principle of inter-operability between forces on either a geographical, strategic alliance, lead force or collaborative basis to allow for the delivery of sustainable and effective protective services throughout Scotland.

The work on Counter Terrorism has complemented activity which has been on-going for some time.

Both the UK and Scottish Counter Terrorism experience had previously confirmed the need for a detailed assessment of Capacity and Capability.

This work has not in itself been seen as a 'delivery plan' rather; it offers a clear 'roadmap' and strategic vision for future CT policing structures across Scotland.

This year has also seen the development of the new Business Change arrangements which will enable Scotland's police forces to, at last, progress towards common Integrated ICT systems which support an agreed National Business Model of Policing.

This will allow individual Chief Constables to have the capability to target resources, effort and emphasis on those operational policing priorities, activities and outcomes which are consistent with agreed community needs and expectations.

ACPOS has contributed significantly in taking forward the delivery of the recommendations made by Sir Michael Bichard, following the tragic Soham Murders.

This is a critical piece of work which will ensure that appropriate structures, working practices and technical systems are in place throughout Scotland and the United Kingdom and is a key element in the development of integrated national IT systems, the introduction of Information Management protocols and the enhancement of vetting and barring procedures relating to working with children and young persons.

Significant progress has also taken place in relation to the development of a National Performance Management Framework for Scotland, with £5.3 Million of funding provided through the Efficient Government Fund to establish a common IT Performance Platform, which will assist in driving performance improvement throughout Scotland and remove much of the duplication in data collection and reporting.

The overall objective is to have an accurate and consistent picture of police performance across Scotland, within national standards of performance and service delivery.

As Chair of the Performance Management Business Area, I am a strong advocate of these developments but progress must be achieved without undermining the ability to target and resolve Local Community Policing priorities or to deliver visible public reassurance Policing. We must avoid the burdensome bureaucracy and negative performance culture, which may all too easily become an undesired outcome.

The new Police Complaints Commissioner began work on April 1, 2007 and will now provide independent scrutiny of how the police service handles non-criminal complaints from the public.

The Commissioner will also have powers to direct police forces to re-examine complaints which have not, in his view, been investigated properly. ACPOS has welcomed the appointment of the Commissioner and will continue to work with him.

The past year has also seen the continued development of working arrangements with many of our existing partners. Relationships in the Community Planning arena are maturing and many examples of good practice designed to meet community needs are now emerging throughout Scotland.

There are continuing challenges on how we tackle the difficult issue of Sex Offender Management. The development of Community Justice Authorities (CJA) and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA's) will have a significant impact on this important area of police activity and once fully established will enhance the arrangements which are in place to enable agencies to monitor and manage both Sex and Violent Offenders more effectively.

The revised Scottish Strategic Assessment, for the first time, now considers all three levels of criminality, within the National Intelligence Model, and enables police forces to identify and prioritise issues which range from youth disorder to serious and organised criminality and counter terrorism.

Significant work has taken place to enhance the quality of this document which has drawn heavily on strategic assessments compiled within Scotland and the rest of the UK.

This year, the Chief Constables and ACPOS have welcomed the establishment of the new Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) which has a remit to provide support services to Scottish police forces on a national basis as well as maintaining the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA), which has been placed on a statutory footing and been given new statutory functions.

The SPSA has taken over responsibility for the staff and functions of the Scottish Police College, what were previously the Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO) and the Scottish Police Information Strategy (SPIS).

It is also responsible with the Service for the establishment of a new Scottish Forensic Science Service, which comprises of the four existing police laboratories, the four fingerprint bureaux and Force Crime Scene Management.

Governance and accountability of the SPSA is being developed through the SPSA board which has Chief Constable, Police Convenor and independent lay membership. The SPSA has had a difficult birth and there is a continuing

need for constructive dialogue with the SPSA to develop both formal and informal communication networks which embed a customer supplier relationship which meet the needs of the Police Service.

APCOS are committed to engaging positively with the SPSA to allow for its future development and to ensure the delivery of efficient, high quality services to each of the existing Scottish Police Forces.

The Authority as an independent body within the extended police family has a responsibility for providing strategic direction to existing centres of excellence such as the SPC and the SCDEA.

Existing strengths should be retained and developed by working together and listening to the needs of the service, as a customer, and future growth should be considered on an incremental basis as confidence and credibility as a deliverer of high quality best value services increases.

The genuine removal of duplication and evidenced inefficiencies within Force Support Services with the subsequent release of those savings back to Operational Policing will be welcomed and strongly endorsed by ACPOS.

We must, however, beware unwittingly of creating the elephant which sits in the room and which over time becomes an expensive monopoly supplier of support services which draws funding away from front-line policing delivery.

There has been much discussion during the last 12 months on policing and public sector reform with the Executive document 'Transforming Public Services' seeking views on how the transformation of Public Services could be achieved.

The aim of this process was to shape the direction of the development of Public Sector Reform Policy and to determine the future direction of the long-term transformation of Public Services within Scotland.

From the outset, it has been evident that any ambition for service transformation should apply equally across the whole spectrum of the public sector.

Within the ACPOS environment, there has been broad agreement towards the emerging views and whilst we have been active contributors to the debate perhaps, to this point, as leaders of the service, we have been too passive in articulating our professional view.

It is evident that a 'one size fits all' approach will not suffice and it is also clear that change should not only be about re-structuring if at all.

We welcome the opportunity to engage with the new administration and in particular the Cabinet Secretary for Justice Mr MacAskill and the Minister for Community Safety Fergus Ewing and, if invited, by sharing our professional

views to assist in informing and shaping the thinking of Ministers as they develop and set their priorities for policing and the criminal justice sector.

This is a modern, progressive and successful police service which is constantly changing and evolving. As leaders of the service, we embrace change. We are also realistic, receptive and constructive. If it can be achieved, we welcome the commitment to provide an additional 1000 police officers and will work with the new administration to maximise their visible impact within our communities.

Policing budgets are, however, already very tight with significant cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings having to be made in this financial year for police forces merely to standstill.

As Chief Constables, we are committed to ensuring that we establish a service which is fit for purpose in the 21st century and which plays a pivotal role in creating safer communities within Scotland.

It is my view that the next stages of continuing reform must be well founded, evidenced, affordable and grounded in practical reality.

We must retain the existing strengths of local accountability and governance put in place an increased capacity and capability to deliver across the protective services including counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime and maintain the delivery of a highly visible, community-focussed style of policing which tackles anti-social behaviour, provides public re-assurance and builds public confidence within our communities.

As Chief Constable of Northern Constabulary with the responsibility of providing strategic direction and leadership across the 10,000 square miles of the Highlands and Islands, I believe that our success in maintaining the lowest recorded crime in the UK, with high detection rates and public confidence demonstrates that a localised, community policing model led by a Chief Officer team which is visible and locally accountable remains the most appropriate policing style for these communities.

The debate in my view should not be about re-structuring and the number of police forces as an end in itself.

Co-terminosity with local authority, health and criminal justice partners who focus on agreed joint activity and commit to joint outcomes is paramount.

A debate is, however, on-going with professional advisors, staff associations, academic commentators and some senior officers advocating differing models of policing delivery and community safety in Scotland.

I believe that there is no 'one-size' or one service which can fit all. The needs and expectations of the communities in the Highlands and Islands are markedly different to those in our large urban centres.

I do believe, however, that is in the best interests of our communities in Scotland and the police service to bring this debate to a close and commit to a clear vision of the future of policing in Scotland.

I am not an advocate of re-structuring. If, however, our strong professional view cannot resolve this debate, then I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that I would personally endorse the establishment of an independent transparent commission with the remit to consider and take evidence from all stakeholders, partners, professionals and communities and to make clear and explicit recommendations to Ministers on the delivery of policing and the creation of safer communities to 2020 and beyond.

Within ACPOS, we are determined that policing should continue to be at the forefront of public service responsiveness.

The challenges which policing faces for 2007/08 are significant; however, the work which has taken place in the past year creates a strong foundation.

As a service, we look forward to the year ahead and in handing over to my successor, Colin McKerracher, I am confident that the Scottish Police Service will continue to be an active partner in the debate that I have just described, with an emphasis on improving both our existing practices and the level of service which is provided to the public on a day-to-day basis, thus ensuring the well-being of all of our communities throughout Scotland.