

## HOME SECRETARY'S ORAL STATEMENT

### Sir Ronnie Flanagan's Review of Policing in England & Wales

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement in response to Sir Ronnie Flanagan's independent review of policing in England and Wales. Copies of the final report have been placed in the Library of the House.

I want to start by thanking Sir Ronnie for his report. He has worked hard meeting and talking to people up and down the country. I particularly appreciate the work he has done to include the voices and views of frontline officers.

His recommendations are independent and challenging to all of us, across the political spectrum, and to the police themselves.

Mr Speaker, in asking Sir Ronnie to carry out this review, we were determined to find the best ways to ensure that the investment this government has made in extra police officers and police community support officers has an impact where it counts – with visible teams in every neighbourhood and with officers able to focus on what will really make a difference in continuing to reduce crime levels.

The report is wide ranging. It deserves further reflection and discussion. It raises important questions about how working practices can be reformed, so that police officers can get the most out of their job and communities can get the best out of the police.

In the area of reducing bureaucracy, I believe we can make quick progress, and this where I will focus today. As the Association of Chief Police Officers recognises in its submission to the Review, "current levels of unnecessary bureaucracy are created both within as well as outside the police service."

Sir Ronnie is clear that freeing up police officers to do the job they came into policing to do requires more than simply removing paperwork, important though that is. It is not just about cutting requirements from the centre, important though that is.

It requires new thinking on performance management from top to bottom of the police service; new attitudes to risk; new ways of working across the criminal justice system; and new technology to support the work of policing.

I accept that challenge. We are already making progress in response to Sir Ronnie's interim report from September:

- Firstly, from this April, our new Public Service Agreements and targets will provide greater flexibility to focus on what matters locally, on serious violence and on anti-social behaviour, and to streamline the process that gets suspected criminals to court.

- Secondly, we are consulting on reforms to the working of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act that will reduce police bureaucracy and will allow experienced officers to focus on their core roles by making better use of police staff.
- Thirdly, working with my Rt Hon Friends the Justice Secretary and the Attorney General, I am piloting a range of improvements to the way the police work with the courts and the wider criminal justice system. These include virtual courts – where initial results show cuts in the average time between charge and first hearing for bail cases from 9½ days to less than 3½ hours – and new streamlined processes to reduce police and administrative time in preparing prosecution files.
- Fourthly, we are investing in new technology to make crime fighting more effective and to save officers' time – including video identity parades, livescan electronic fingerprinting, body-worn cameras, and the £50m capital fund that will deliver 10,000 mobile data devices by September.

I want to end the days of officers having to enter details more than once, on systems that don't talk to each other.

Sir Ronnie's final report shows how we can go further, and identifies further savings to the equivalent of 2,500 to 3,500 officers a year. I accept his recommendations to achieve this.

I commend Sir Ronnie for his careful and measured consideration of how to reduce the bureaucracy surrounding Stop and Account. I agree with his proposal that we should scrap the lengthy form that officers use to record data when they carry out this critical activity.

But, Mr Speaker, I do not underestimate the need to build community confidence in policing. We must be able to monitor the proportionality of stops. So I welcome the proposal that we use Airwave police radio technology to record any encounter, and that the simple card officers will give out to those stopped will have a phone number that they can call.

We will immediately pilot this new approach to stop and account in three areas and I expect the changes to be national later this year.

As the House will know, Stop and Account is a very different issue from Stop and Search, for which Sir Ronnie says "a more formal and comprehensive process is both proportionate and appropriate."

When a person is stopped and searched, there should be a higher level of recording than during an encounter. But as Sir Ronnie says, the information gathered should be minimal and relevant to the aim of the search.

I welcome the work already being done by the Metropolitan Police and the Metropolitan Police Authority, in co-operation with community representatives, to produce a shorter form, which they are introducing later this month.

Separately, the use of handheld devices to allow officers to input information directly and create a central record of a stop and search is cutting the average time from 25 minutes to 6 minutes.

In view of the considerable benefits identified, I am calling on all Chief Constables to streamline their forms and process in the way Sir Ronnie has advocated.

Both Stop and Search and Stop and Account can be powerful tools in tackling crime. So from April we will extend police powers to tackle gang-related gun and knife crime – enabling officers to stop and search in designated areas where an act of serious violence has taken place, as well as in anticipation of serious violence.

Mr Speaker, we can now go further in other areas of recording. Sir Ronnie proposes that we endorse a radical new approach being trialled in Staffordshire and other forces, where police are freeing up more time to deal with victims of crime by using a standard one page form. Officers are able to use their discretion in how much further information they record, proportionate to the severity of the crime. I will ensure that this approach can be introduced nationally as soon as possible.

In today's report Sir Ronnie celebrates the development and delivery of neighbourhood policing. Thanks to the hard work of forces and police authorities throughout England and Wales, there will be a team for every neighbourhood in April.

More than 3,600 teams are now in place, and 16,000 police community support officers have been recruited. Up and down the country, at public meetings and in street briefings, local communities are helping to influence their team's priorities. And throughout March, people will be hearing more about who their local teams are and how they can contact them.

I have asked Sir Ronnie to report back to me in six months on the progress we and the police are making to reduce bureaucracy. This Spring, I will publish a Green paper with proposals for greater flexibility for frontline officers and staff, greater reductions in bureaucracy, strengthened local accountability arrangements and a reformed performance management framework.

Mr Speaker, Sir Ronnie's report sets out a powerful challenge for how we can adapt to meet the demands of 21st century policing.

- Freeing police officers from unnecessary red tape.
- Giving them the skills and the tools for the valuable job they do.
- Delivering neighbourhood policing in every area.
- Ensuring a better police service, for officers, victims and communities alike.

Working together, it is a challenge that I am sure the police service and government will rise to. I commend this statement to the House.