INTRODUCTION

Welcome to RSM’s latest emergency services sector briefing which provides a useful source of insight into recent developments and publications affecting the sector.

It has been a whirlwind few months for the country and government with the decision taken to vote for a ‘Brexit’ and the consequent arrival of a new Prime Minister. With Theresa May moving to number 10, Amber Rudd takes the reins at the new look Home Office and has already laid out her plans to tackle the growing problem of hate crime in England and Wales. Furthermore, Brandon Lewis replaces Mike Penning as Minister of State for Fire and Policing. Mr Lewis was a leading supporter of Mrs May’s campaign for leadership and his recent experience with the government’s ‘Housing and Planning Act’ means he comes with knowledge of navigating a complex bill through to royal assent.

Also inside this edition we look at other recent developments within the sector including:

• the new Commons Select Committee reports on the proceeds of crime and police diversity;
• the publication of crime figures and police officer numbers; and
• a report on the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles.

We hope you find this update a useful source of insight. If you have any queries, or suggestions for future editions, please contact either myself, or your usual RSM contact and we will be delighted to help.

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Police officers down but demand up
The total number of police officers has decreased again for the year ending 31 March 2016. In a total workforce of 200,922 (down 3.3 per cent), the number of police officers totalled 124,066, representing a decrease of 2.5 per cent on the figures at March 2015. In light of the recent Home Affairs Committee (HAC) report on police diversity, the total number of black and minority ethnic (BME) officers stood at 5.9 per cent of all officers, forming the highest proportion of BME officers seen in the police force for ten years. Furthermore, BME officers accounted for 12.1 per cent of all police officers recruited and represented a 2.4 percentage point increase on the previous year.

The police officer statistics coincided with the release of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) annual Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) outcomes for the year ending March 2016. Some of the headline figures in the CSEW include:

- 6.3m total offences against adults, representing a 6 per cent decrease on the metric last year; and
- 40 of the 44 police forces recorded increases in crime, with ‘violence against the person’ up 27 per cent and ‘sexual offences’ up 21 per cent.

Included in the CSEW are the results of new questions asked about fraud and computer misuse. The figures are still experimental with respondent data only collected for the last six months of the yearly survey and then altered to reflect an estimate for the year. In total there were 3.8m fraud incidents with 51 per cent of these being cyber-related. There were also 2m incidents of computer misuse, 68 per cent of which were ‘computer virus related’ and 32 per cent related to unauthorised access of personal information including hacking.

In response to these figures the College of Policing advised:

“There are dozens of ways the internet can be used to exploit and defraud people, and officers need to be equipped with the skills to tackle these crimes.”

In our view, these figures show that cybercrime is not a remote existential threat and is obviously affecting millions of individuals and businesses throughout the country.

Trends in cybercrime will be identified in future editions of the survey, with the sophisticated techniques used by cyber criminals and fraudsters causing many operational challenges and complex investigations for police forces.

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• Do you understand the demand on your Force and have you got the skills and capacity to respond to the demand?
• What is the impact on officer numbers and focus as a result of the new Police and Crime Plans due to come in?

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• How is the Force working to both prevent and raise awareness of cybercrime?
• How are the Force training officers to record and investigate the increased occurrence of cybercrime?
• How will the results of any future analysis be used to recruit or retrain officers?
Proceeds of crime
The Home Affairs Committee (HAC) has published the report of its inquiry on the proceeds of crime, citing a 2013 National Audit Office report that found that for every £100 of criminal proceeds, only 26 pence was confiscated. In light of this, and a number of recommendations by the Public Accounts Committee, which were accepted by government in June 2014, the HAC finds that criminals are still finding ever more sophisticated ways to conceal their profits, with investigators not being equipped to confiscate at an early enough stage. The HAC calls for compulsory financial investigative training to be given to all new recruits with detective officers receiving advanced financial training yearly. The HAC also criticises the government for the several ‘asset recovery databases’ being used, arguing there should be one central system.

Police diversity
Under-representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) individuals in the police sector in England and Wales needs ‘urgent and radical’ action according to a new report by the Home Affairs Committee (HAC). In a damning report, the Committee highlighted that no police force had BME representation matching their local demographic, with four forces not employing any black or black British police officers. The HAC reports that in order to reach demographic level targets by 2024 17,000, or one in four police officers, recruited would be of BME origin. A lack of senior BME representation in police forces is also being interpreted as an ‘unconscious bias’.

Hate crime action plan
In her first policy announcement since becoming Home Secretary, Amber Rudd has unveiled plans to tackle ‘Hate Crime’ in the UK. The four year action plan comes in a post-referendum UK which has seen many forces reporting increases in hate crimes. The plan is based on five main areas:

• prevention through better education and challenging beliefs and attitudes;
• responding to hate crime in key areas including security at vulnerable faith institutions, tackling hate crime on public transport and in the ‘night-time economy’ and taking action against online hate crime;
• improving the reporting process for hate crime;
• improving the support for victims; and
• making use of better quality data.

The policy document features a specific section on ‘improving the police response to hate crime’, which builds on a number of the proposals. Some of the main requirements that police forces will be expected to adhere to include: disaggregating hate crime data via religion to further understand differences and trends; attendance at identified training to be provided by the National Policing Lead and College of Policing; and ensuring hate crime data is accurately recorded on new IT systems that integrate across the criminal justice system.

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• Do you know the performance of your Force and how you compare to others?
• Can you work collaboratively with other Forces to improve your performance or use resources more effectively in this area?
• Do you understand the costs and benefits of your Proceeds of Crime Team?

Question for Committee’s consideration
• Are current recruitment diversity strategies fit for purpose, do they need to be reviewed and are you receiving assurance they are working effectively?

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• How are you responding to this action plan within your Force?
• Are police officers adequately trained and supported to identify, record and investigate hate crimes?
FIRE

What next for fire reform?
On 24 May, the then Home Secretary Theresa May, gave her first speech since the transfer of fire and rescue services to the Home Office. The speech, which took place at the think-tank Reform, gave some indications as to Mrs May’s intentions for the fire and rescue services, which now seem particularly pertinent since her accession to become Prime Minister.

Building her speech around the structural changes already made to the sector since 2010, Mrs May was critical citing a fire service that ‘has succeeded in spite of the framework it operates in, not because of it. A fire and rescue service still beset by poor governance and structures.’ Mrs May also announced in her speech: the continuing commitment to legislate for collaboration between emergency services; and hints at measures to counter the ‘culture of bullying and harassment’.

Fire and rescue national framework
The Home Office has published its bi-yearly report on fire and rescue authorities’ progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The report confirms that the Home Secretary is satisfied that fire and rescue services are operating in compliance with the framework, and that no additional steps are deemed necessary to assure such compliance. Yet there are some areas where ‘practice could be strengthened’ including:

• consistency of approach in relation to presenting evidence and information in assurance statements;
• sign off by the chair of the fire and rescue authority; and
• the timing of revisions to integrated risk management plans.

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• Have you reviewed the effectiveness of your governance structures?
• Do you understand the culture of your organisation and has this been reviewed independently?
• Is the Authority in discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner and have you actively considered future collaboration with the police?

• Have you reviewed the areas identified as ‘practice could be strengthened’ to understand if any changes would be beneficial?
COLLABORATION

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
A review led by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) investigates collaboration between the three main emergency services in major cases and details whether the services have embedded the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) into their organisations. HMIC makes a number of recommendations including, requesting that ministerial oversight for JESIP focus on ‘improving interoperability’ across the three services not just for complex incidents, but also for ‘business as usual’. This latter point is highly relevant in light of the government’s continuing push for greater collaboration between the emergency services.

Policing and Crime Bill update
Since our last emergency services sector briefing the Policing and Crime Bill (the bill) has passed a number of stages in the legislative process.

While the bill continues to be supported by both sides of the House, an amendment has been introduced by the government that allows the appointment of a chief fire and rescue inspector, who would be required to: prepare a programme for the inspection of the fire and rescue services; produce reports based on their inspections; and make an annual report to parliament.

This would, in the words of former Minister Mike Penning:

‘help fire and rescue authorities be more transparent and more accountable.’

In the second reading debate in the House of Lords there was one noticeable contribution from an active police commissioner, the Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and Labour peer Lord Bach. Lord Bach raised three concerns over the prospect of part 1 of the bill: the case for police and crime commissioners taking on responsibility for fire and rescue services.

1. In the event of a merger between police and fire, Lord Bach expressed concern that, when faced with budget cuts particularly in light of ‘Brexit’, it would ‘nearly always’ be the fire and rescue services that bear the brunt of funding reductions.

2. Lord Bach questioned whether the government would provide extra administrative resources for any PCC who ‘goes down the merger route’.

3. In considering whether the government would exert financial or other pressures to PCCs who do not go down the merger route, Lord Bach questioned:

‘will it be optional only in name and mandatory in effect?’

In response the Conservative peer, Lord Keen of Elie, stated that:

‘there is no question of a PCC being forced to proceed with a merger.’

The bill now proceeds to committee stage in the House of Lords which is due to report on 14 September.

Questions for Committee’s consideration
• Do you understand the impact for your organisation?
• Have you considered the JESIP in your future plans?
SO ONCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2016 – Home Office

Crime in England and Wales: year ending Mar 2016 – ONS

Latest crime survey shows extent of cyber crime threat – RSM

College comment on annual crime stats – College of Policing
http://www.college.police.uk/News/College-news/Pages/annual_crime_stats.aspx

Proceeds of Crime – House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Confiscation Orders – National Audit Office, 2013

Police Diversity – House of Commons Home Affairs Committee

Action Against Hate: The UK Government’s plan for tackling hate crime – Home Office

What next for fire reform? – Theresa May speech for Reform
http://www.reform.uk/publication/what-next-for-fire-reform/

Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue
Authorities progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England – Home Office

The tri-service review of the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) – HMIC

Policing and Crime Bill – Parliament, Hansard
http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/policingandcrime/stages.html

https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2016-07-18/debates/16071823000451/PolicingAndCrimeBill
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