

## FORMULA GRANT DISTRIBUTIONCONSULTATION RESPONSE

### DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority welcomes the chance to comment on proposed changes to the grant system. This authority, like many providing essential services in predominantly rural areas, appears to lose varying amounts under most of the options. In some cases the potential amounts are large and way beyond the capacity of a body like Devon and Cornwall police to accommodate without severe service reductions.

With the threat of a very challenging grant situation as a result of CSR 07, efficiency savings already fully required to keep going and a restrictive capping regime, authorities like this one have nowhere else to go. If grant redistribution takes place without compensating safety nets, if our rural fund is lost and/or if grant distribution damping is diminished, major service reductions will have to follow - directly attributable to government policy.

Devon and Cornwall Police need help on resources. We have nowhere else to turn. Please do not make things worse by redistributing grant away from rural areas like this.

In particular,

Please do not use the later data on Activity Based Costing as marginal changes in what is basically a flawed and immature sample survey do not justify large grant shifts away from shire areas.

Please maintain the rural fund. This exists precisely because the general grant system fails to provide adequately for rural problems. To merge it with general grant would be a contradiction.

Please do not merge the Crime Fighting Fund into general grant if that penalises those authorities who have enhanced their police numbers in line with government policy.

Please do not relax the current safety nets. CSR 2007 is likely to be very difficult for policing. A time of restrictions on general grant increases is exactly the wrong time to encourage grant re-distribution.

This response fits into the official format as requested but only deals with the questions with a major potential impact on policing.

Name John Glasby on behalf of members

Position Treasurer

Organisation Devon and Cornwall Police Authority

Address Endeavour House, Woodwater Park, Pynes Hill, Exeter EX2 5WH

E-mail [john.glasby@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk](mailto:john.glasby@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk)

Q7 Do you agree the resource base should be updated (POL 1)?

**NO – ABC is too immature to justify large grant swings**

Comment:

In normal circumstances, it would be difficult to argue against using the latest available data. However the proposal to use later versions of the Activity Based Costing information is inappropriate unless the quality of the data can be considerably improved. Marginal changes in ABC produce significant grant changes effectively moving moneys away from rural areas towards urban ones. This is not acceptable. ABC is flawed, and in its present form is incapable of justifying such large grant swings. ABC information is not fact. It is an extrapolation based on small sample periods - snap shots of activity which are logged with varying degrees of accuracy up and down the country. Very small changes are shown which may well be within the margin of error for the samples. Yet it appears these marginal shifts in apparent activity produce relatively large swings in grant. These changes should not be implemented until ABC is more consistent and more mature.

Q8 Do you agree that the additional rule 2 grants should be rolled into principal formula Police Grant (POL2)?

**NO – as far as the Rural Policing Fund is concerned**

Comment:

The Rural Policing Fund was a major step forward to acknowledge the real resourcing problems in rural areas not adequately reflected in the general formula. Although it has been eroded by inflation over the years it continues to be extremely useful. The fund does not suffer from the usual problem of specific grants in that it does not fetter local discretion in any way. It would be entirely inappropriate to merge this grant into general grant because it was created precisely because general grant failed to reflect the problems of sparsity adequately. This was clearly demonstrated when the fund was established and, if anything, grant changes since have made this issue even more relevant today. The Rural Policing Fund should be maintained and enhanced for inflation and not merged with general grant.

Q9 Do you agree the Crime Fighting Fund should be rolled into principal formula Police Grant (POL3)?

**NO – if it penalises those who have invested in police numbers in good faith.**

Comment:

The Crime Fighting fund was devised to enhance police officer numbers. Many authorities supported government policy and put more officers on the street. No changes should be made which penalises those authorities who have invested in this way in good faith.

The consultation does not mention PCSO funding. Confirmation that existing grant levels are to be maintained and enhanced for inflation is essential if investment in neighbourhood policing is to be maintained.

Q22

Do you support the approach of reducing the levels of grant floors over the 3 years of the settlement?

**NO – the tight settlement expected under CSR07 is the wrong time for redistribution.**

Comment:

Grant floors or safety nets have served Devon and Cornwall well and we are grateful for them. Debate over how or if they should be relaxed is understandable. However, now is exactly the wrong time to relax them and expose vulnerable authorities to further grant losses just when resource constraints are tightening for all. Safety nets are essential to protect service delivery in a tight financial settlement. They should be maintained over the life of CSR07. This would be even more critical if some of the other grant swings implied by other questions are imposed.