


# EXCELLENCE IN POLICING CONFERENCE

## EFFECTIVE LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

**21 September 2009**  
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## Objectives

### EFFECTIVE LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY (IN POLICING)

- Explore some key definitions (and their implications)
- Brief contextual comments
- Analytical rather than descriptive
- The accountability question – designing the infrastructure and pitfalls

## Key Definitions

- Accountable – responsible; required to account for one's conduct (accountable for one's actions) [OED] *Responsible – (often followed by to or for) liable to be called to account (to a person or for a thing)*
- Sir Ronnie's notion of answerability and responsiveness:
 

"7.15 In referring to accountability, I refer to a mix of the three elements identified in the interim report – responsiveness, answerability and (structural) accountability – where:

**1 responsiveness** refers to behaviour (actions and their conduct); *which should be driven by priorities and need;*

**2 answerability** is the process through which those held to account are required to explain (and justify) their actions; *and how they relate to local people's concerns and input; and*

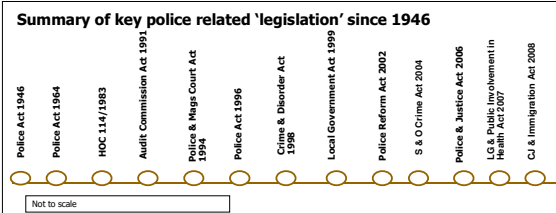
**3 structural accountability** is the formal set of institutionalised relationships that should help to bring about appropriate responsiveness, and answerability; *governance and scrutiny arrangements."*

\*The Review of Policing: Final Report – Sir Ronnie Flanagan (Feb 2008)

## The context (1) : The paradox of police authorities

- **Police Authorities face a veritable army of critics including elements within all of the main political parties...**
- **and there are a number of current developments that could significantly alter their role...**
- **But successive governments have consistently increased their responsibilities, duties and powers**

### Summary of key police related 'legislation' since 1946



Police Act 1946  
 Police Act 1964  
 HOC 114/1983  
 Audit Commission Act 1991  
 Police & Magistrates Act 1994  
 Police Act 1996  
 Crime & Disorder Act 1998  
 Local Government Act 1999  
 Police Reform Act 2002  
 S & O Crime Act 2004  
 Police & Justice Act 2006  
 LG & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007  
 CJ & Immigration Act 2008

Not to scale

## The Context (2) : The challenge for police authorities

**The critique** - Home Office recent 'police authority related' publications

The role of police authorities in public engagement (2003), On-line Report 37/03

Public perceptions of police accountability and decision-making (2003), On-line Report 38/03

Involving the public; the role of police authorities (2003), Development and Practice Report 13

Widening access: Improving police relations with hard to reach groups, Police Research Series Paper 128

PA role & engagement / consultation mechanisms are not recognised by public

Variable engagement of 'hard to hear' groups

Public don't feel they have a say in decisions about policing

Limited evidence of engagement having an impact on policing plans

Public appetite for better information about, and involvement in, how they are policed.


WHEN THE CONCEPT OF PAs IS EXPLAINED:

- MOST PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE USEFUL PROVIDED THEY ARE EFFECTIVE


- BUT BECAUSE MANY HAD NOT HEARD OF PAs THEY DOUBTED THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

**PAs should publicise themselves (and their activities and impact) more effectively**


## The Context (3): The ongoing national debate



**A PEOPLE'S POLICE FORCE**  
 Police Accountability in the Modern Era  
 Rt Hon David Blunkett MP  
 July 2009



**Strengthening local democracy: Consultation**  
 Department of C&LG



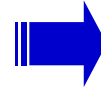
**International comparison research: models of police governance and accountability**  
 Desmond Rea, Debbie Donnelly & Joanne Fitzsimons

## The Context (4): Accountability in policing isn't static

Levels of accountability	Types of accountability		
	Financial & Managerial	Operational	Democratic
Strategic (Force)			
Intermediary (BCU)			
Tactical (N'hood)			

## The Context (5): This is complex and difficult

### Effective Local Accountability...



Now that, my dear James, is what I call a Dog's Breakfast....

...is elusive as a concept and in practical application.

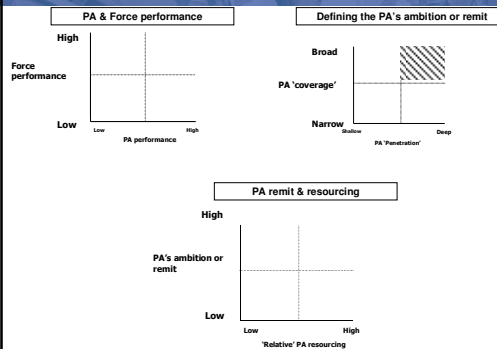
## Context (5): My tuppenn'orth



### Personal observations:

- Focus on "effective" and "local" accountability
- Patten's notion of "operational accountability"
- Evolving role of HMIC
- The case for good governance & stewardship
- Critical importance of administrative arrangements (Scheme(s) of delegation)
- Two sides to 'accountable' and 'responsible'

## Accountability in policing (1): Ambition & strategic intent



## Accountability in policing (2): Designing and building the infrastructure

- 'Form follows Function' - officer support, training & development, member capacity & capability, vetting
- Mix and balance of members and portfolios
- Administrative (legal) foundations – delegation and committee structure
- Balancing agreed priorities and the 'tricky' (low volume – high complexity) stuff
- 'Softer' elements of relationship building and negotiating / influencing

## Accountability in policing (3): Avoiding the pitfalls

- Optimising member activity (as opposed to contribution and value added)
- 'Shadow managing' force activity
- Addressing PA inspection themes (performance management, strategic partnerships, member capacity & capability)
- 'Stockholm-ing'
- Succumbing to 'stretch' and 'mission creep'
- The lure of the national stage

Questions & discussion

