

## **Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill 2011 – CSP Leads Briefing, October 2011**

On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2011, the Bill was granted Royal Assent and became the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (PRSRA).

In the final stages prior to Royal Assent, the House of Lords approved an amendment to the Bill to change the date of the first elections for Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012, due to the tight timescales for planning and holding elections in May.

Once in place, the PCC will be held to account in a number of ways with police and crime panels (PCPs) playing a key role in providing the checks and balances to the power of PCCs. PCPs will have powers to make reports and recommendations about any actions and decisions taken by the PCC, and will have a specific role in scrutinising the draft Police and Crime Plan, council tax precept, chief constable appointments, and the Annual Report.

Transparency will also be integral to the scrutiny process. All reports and recommendations made by PCPs will be published and sent to the force's local authorities; in return, the PCC must publish all their responses. The PCP will be able to publicly question the PCC about their actions and will have a specific responsibility to do this in relation to the Annual Report, which demonstrates progress made against the Police and Crime Plan. They will be able to invite the chief constable to attend these sessions but will not be able to compel their attendance.

The PCP will also have veto powers over the PCC's proposals on the force precept, and over the appointment of the chief constable. While the PCP will have responsibility for scrutiny of the actions and decisions of the PCC, scrutiny of the performance of the force will be the role of the PCC.

In addition, PCC's will be audited by the appropriate external body (for example, the Welsh Audit Office in Wales) and Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabularies (HMIC) will also have the power to inspect police forces and report back to the public with objective and robust information on which to make informed judgements about the effectiveness of the force and the PCC for that area.

As well as publishing the Police and Crime Plan and the Annual Report, PCCs will be required to publish information which will help the public to understand what is happening in their area. The public can then use this information to hold the PCC to account and to inform their view on the PCC's work.

Unlike England, PCPs in Wales will be freestanding bodies established by the Home Secretary, and the Government anticipates that local authorities and councillors within Wales will want to play a leading role in this reform.

In order to effectively manage the transition in Gwent, a transition board has been established with local authorities offered a position via Chief Executives. The inaugural meeting has now taken place, producing a plan of action to be undertaken over the allotted timescale. The Gwent Transition Board has linked in with both the Welsh and the UK Transition Boards to ensure that the best progress is made locally. Further updates regarding progress and additional information will be provided over the coming months.

The PRSRA can be found on the Parliament website:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/policeandsocialresponsibility/documents.html>