

Mr Ian Patel
Apple Barn
Smeeth
Kent
TN25 6SS

31st May 2011

RE: Policing cuts won't be as damaging as union is claiming.

Dear Mr Patel,

The comments about police cuts made to your paper by Mark Reckless MP (KOS 29/5) demand a response.

As a former member of Kent Police Authority and a serving member of the Home Affairs Select Committee I would expect Mr Reckless to be far better informed on policing issues. The Police Federation is not a trade union. The Police Federation is a professional body that exists to represent all matters of officers' welfare and efficiency. It is the efficiency of the service, given the scale of cuts, which we seek to highlight.

Let me dispel some other myths pedalled by Mr Reckless.

It is outrageous when Mr Reckless claims it is "almost impossible to lose an officer, even if he or she is no good at their job". Through his membership of the Police Authority he knows that simply is not the case. It is rather rich that such an accusation should come from an MP who was so intoxicated he couldn't do his duty on the day of the emergency budget last summer. I can assure your readers that such conduct would have attracted dismissal for a police officer.

Mr Reckless questions whether job losses will be as severe as projected. At the last Police Authority meeting on 20/4 he was present when the Chief Constable reaffirmed that Kent Police would lose 500 police officers and 1000 police staff as a consequence of the cuts. Did Mr Reckless challenge the Chief Constable over these figures? No he did not. Mr Reckless appears to prefer making these claims when they cannot be scrutinised.

My challenge to Mr Reckless is simple. You seem to believe the answer lies in neighbourhood policing. If you believe crime won't increase then where would you cut 500 police officers from? Do we make the cuts in child protection and domestic abuse? What about surveillance or undercover work? Perhaps we should make the cuts in departments dealing with sex offenders or counter terrorism? The reality is you, like the Home Office, believe that policing is all about uniformed "bobbies on the beat". They are important but policing is far more than just that.

In the last 10 years we have seen crime rates fall and police officer numbers have increased. These cuts will see police officer numbers fall back to the

level in 2000 and crime will rise. If Mr Reckless, like the public, “would obviously prefer more officers than less” perhaps he ought to do something about it. Perhaps he ought to be questioning why in four years his government will be spending significantly more on overseas aid than it will on protecting its own citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Pointon
Chairman
Kent Police Federation.