The cost of not choosing our greener options

Every year for Conference, we spend around £30,000 and use over two tonnes of FSC recycled paper on printing copies of agendas, directories, policy papers and reports to conference.

Hundreds of our members are already selecting our Green Pack and online-only options.

Why not join them next time and get your papers digitally at: http://www.libdems.org.uk/conference_papers

Crime and Policing

Consultation Paper 138

Published by:
Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats,
8-10 Great George Street,
London, SW1P 3AE

Printed by:
Sarum Colourview, Unit 8, The
Woodford Centre, Old Sarum,
Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP4 6BU

ISBN: 978-1-910763-64-3

Spring Conference 2019

Background

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to crime and policing. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full policy paper on immigration, refugees and identity will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Vicki Cardwell. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

Comments on the paper, and requests for speakers, should be addressed to: Jonathan Everett, Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 8 - 10 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AE. Email: policy.consultations@libdems.org.uk

Comments should reach us as soon as possible and no later than Sunday 31st March 2019.

Further copies of this paper can be found online at www.libdems.org.uk/policy_papers

Contents

1. **Introduction** 2

2. **Crime in the UK today** 5

3. **Twenty-first century policing** 8

4. **Non-crime demands on the police** 12

5. **Young people and youth services** 14

6. **Diversity and inequality** 16

7. **Technology and privacy** 18

8. **Supporting the police** 20

1. Introduction

1.1.1 Preventing crime and ensuring people feel safe are crucial to achieving social justice. It is the poorest and most vulnerable who suffer most from crime and benefit most from good policing.

1.1.2 However, levels of serious violent crime in the UK are too high. Almost every day, someone is stabbed to death on Britain's streets. Homicides are at their highest rate in a decade. Far too many victims are children and young people.

1.1.3 The Government's response has been to introduce new laws to put more young people in prison on short-term sentences that don't work to prevent crime. At the same time, the Conservatives' excessive cuts to police funding have taken officers off the streets and left forces stretched much too thin.

1.1.4 These cuts have contributed to the spread of violent crime, but they have also left police without the detectives or resources to solve the vast majority of burglaries and robberies, which are rising too. A lack of officers means that it is taking them longer to respond to calls, allowing offenders to get away and eroding public confidence in the police.

1.1.5 Meanwhile, other demands on the police are growing, from investigating child sexual abuse and online fraud to responding to mental health crises and searching for missing people. Police forces are constantly being expected to do more with less.

1.1.6 The result is that there are more and more places in the country where people simply don't see police officers on the beat or expect the police to respond quickly. This erodes confidence and makes people feel less safe – one of the reasons some young people feel a need to carry knives for protection.

1.1.7 **Liberal Democrats recognise the vital importance of having more police officers on the streets**, to make our communities safer and to make people *feel* safer too. Recruiting more officers will clearly require a substantial increase in government funding for police forces. Instead, Ministers announced another inadequate funding settlement for the police in December 2018, which abrogated responsibility from national government and passed the buck to Police and Crime Commissioners to fund their forces through council tax rises.

1.1.8 Equally damaging have been the Conservatives' cuts to the many services that help prevent crime and can support the police – including youth services and social services. Liberal Democrats understand that more police is only part of the answer. Like any epidemic, tackling violent crime requires a public health approach that addresses not only the disease but also its underlying causes. That will mean enabling better-funded police forces to work more closely with a broad range of partners, from youth services and community groups to schools and the NHS.

1.1.9 The importance of co-operation in fighting crime extends beyond local communities. Our police rely heavily on cross-border tools such as the European Arrest Warrant and the Schengen Information System, as well as collaboration with other EU countries through Europol and Eurojust. **All of these will be weakened or lost if the UK leaves the European Union**. That is why it is so important to stop Brexit through a People's Vote, as the Liberal Democrats have consistently argued.

1.1.10 We must recognise that the nature of policing has changed and will continue to change. We need to find new solutions that are effective at the local level as well as enabling police forces to collaborate across county lines, internationally and with other organisations. Our goal is to develop policy proposals that are effective

in the context of this changing environment and which will prevent crime and make people feel safe.

2. Crime in the UK today

2.1.1 The first step in developing policy on crime and policing is to build a proper understanding of the current situation. Statistics on the number of crimes are an important part of this, but they are not the whole picture. Our goal is to propose policies that, as well as actually making people safer, also make people *feel* safer – so we must look to the crime statistics to tell us both about what is actually happening as well as what people *perceive* to be happening.

2.1.2 Currently the main source of statistics about crime are the crimes recorded by the police and the Crime Survey for England and Wales. The Crime Survey is useful because it includes crimes that aren't reported to the police – so it shows the types of crimes that tend to be underreported – and also asks people about their attitudes towards crime. However, both sources need to be looked at together for a full picture and require careful interpretation.

2.1.3 A simplistic reading of the Crime Survey data might quickly lead to complacency. For this shows the medium-term trend for crimes to be falling – despite reducing police numbers. Yet the Survey data in the last three years is increasingly at odds with data on crimes recorded by the police, and there are a variety of reasons why a simplistic reading of the Survey data is misleading:

- Serious violent crime is picked up first and more accurately by recorded crime statistics, not the Survey, and this measure shows such crimes have been rocketing. Knife crime has soared by 64% since 2015, while gun crime is up by 31% and homicides by 37%. Robberies and organised crime are increasing too. Such serious crimes inevitably require more police input to solve.
- Over the past ten years, a lot of crime has shifted online and this hasn't been captured by the Crime Survey, which

only started asking about it in 2015. The drop in crime was never as substantial as it appeared on the face of it.

- The mixture and complexity of crimes that police are investigating has increased – from terrorist incidents to a greater number of people reporting cases of rape, domestic abuse and historic sexual abuse to the police. These are more resource-intensive to investigate and have been increasing while resources have been dwindling.
- Hate crime is rising – both in terms of incidents reported to the police and the total number of incidents measured in the Crime Survey – and spiked following the Brexit referendum as well as in the aftermath of the 2017 terrorist attacks.
- A substantial amount of police time is spent handling things that are not crimes: 80% of calls to the police do not result in crimes being recorded. Police spend an increasing amount of time dealing with mental health crises (estimates for police time taken up this way range from 20% to 40%). Missing persons work has seen is another huge rise in demand over the past year.

2.1.4 Because of the types of crime that are increasing – as well as the additional pressures on the police meaning that they are a less visible presence in communities – the public perception is that crime is getting worse. And the people who feel this most keenly are the poorest in society, who cannot afford home security and live near the areas where crime is rising.

2.1.5 Confidence in the police is also a key concern – especially among ethnic minority communities. Arrest rates are generally higher across all ethnic minority groups than they are for the white group and black and mixed ethnicities are arrested at much higher rates: a black person is more than three times more likely to be arrested than a white person. Grievances over policing tactics – especially the

disproportionate use of Stop and Search, have a hugely negative bearing on trust in the police.

Question 1: *How would you assess the problems caused by cuts to police?*

Question 2: *Are there any other trends in crime that are missing from our analysis?*

Question 3: *How do you feel about crime and policing in your local area? Is there anything about your neighbourhood (eg lack of street lights) that makes people feel unsafe?*

3. Twenty-first century policing

3.1.1 Today's police face a different set of challenges to that which they have in the past: violent and organised crime is increasing; anti-social behaviour remains a challenge in many parts of the country; and, crime increasingly takes place online. To help the police respond we need to ensure that they are properly resourced, that they are able to be visible in their communities, that they can recruit people with the skills to adapt to new and emerging types of crime and that they are set up to work in local partnerships with other services.

3.1.2 **The working group is intending to propose a substantial investment in community policing, to ensure that there are additional police officers placed in every ward in England and Wales.** We want the police to be able to build strong links with the communities they serve, so they can intervene at an early stage to deter people from violence and gather the intelligence to prevent and solve crimes.

3.1.3 Policing in the twenty-first century also needs to adapt to the growth of new types of crime: in particular online crime, fraud and cross-border crime. These crimes are very difficult to deal with within existing structures. Dealing with these crimes is technically demanding and requires the police to work across all areas of the UK and often cooperate internationally. The working group is considering what level of reorganisation is needed – including whether local forces as currently constituted are the most appropriate. At present, we do not plan to propose structural reorganisation beyond the creation of a new national agency to tackle cybercrime – taking the responsibility away from the City of London's police service. We would invest in this new agency to ensure that it would attract people with the skills required to effectively investigate cybercrime. We are interested to hear whether members think that a wider reorganisation would be beneficial.

3.1.4 **Crime prevention work must receive a higher priority, built on deepening partnership working.** Indeed, evidence suggests that the most effective way to prevent people falling into crime is to keep them as far away as possible from the criminal justice system. Successful policing – that is effective in reducing crime and making people feel safer – requires working with local partners. This means that our approach must involve the wider public sector (especially health, mental health, local government and education sectors) and the voluntary sector. It has been amply demonstrated that the most effective way to reduce knife crime is through the police working in partnership with health and education services; similarly reducing anti-social behaviour requires the police to work with local authorities and youth services. There is also a role for the private sector in prevention and helping people to feel safer – particularly in terms of security.

3.1.5 **A crime prevention approach is especially important for dealing with violent crime**. Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit, established by Strathclyde Police in 2005, has pioneered a new approach that treats violent crime as a public health issue. As with any disease, treatment begins by diagnosing the problem and understanding its causes. Addressing those causes requires not only the police, but also health professionals, social workers and teachers, working closely together to stop more people being infected by the disease. This approach has proven remarkably successful. Violent crime in Scotland has halved over the past decade. In Glasgow, the number of hospital admissions for stabbings has fallen by 62%. We believe that this is how we should combat serious violence: investing in the police and adopting a public health approach that tackles the root causes.

3.1.6 Serious organised crime has also reached new heights, including modern slavery and the 'county lines' gangs that exploit children to traffic drugs. The national and international nature of these criminal networks means that it is impossible for each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales to tackle them independently. However,

the National Crime Agency does not yet have sufficient resources to go after them all either.

3.1.7 Regarding historic sexual crimes, we clearly need to continue to encourage people to report historic abuse and the police need to properly investigate this. But we must recognise that this area is complex and growing and ensure that the police have adequate resources to manage this growing demand.

3.1.8 There are two areas we believe are vital in a modern approach to cutting crime, though they are not *directly* police matters or core to this working group's remit: rehabilitation and drugs policy.

3.1.9 First, we believe that rehabilitation must receive a greater emphasis in the criminal justice system, because if we cut reoffending, crime plummets. So, when people are in prison, the prison system should be working to help get people ready for a productive life outside of prison – meaning educational facilities and projects need to be properly funded. Effective community sentences need to be properly resourced too and used to turn lives around. But we believe the best way to rehabilitate people is to take measures that prevent them going too deeply into the criminal justice system in the first place: this means championing diversionary measures rather than over-hastily criminalising people.

3.1.10 Second, existing Government drug policy in the UK unnecessarily criminalises too many people. This is particularly true in the case of cannabis – the smell of cannabis is currently used as a ground to Stop and Search and this contributes to the disproportionate number of black people being stopped by police. Cannabis is the most widely used drug in the UK and the existing Lib Dem policy to introduce a legal and regulated market for cannabis would tackle this problem. In several places around the UK, police forces are already taking a similar attitude towards dealing with drugs by not pursuing or criminalising people in possession of drugs for personal use – instead focussing

resources on gangs and organised crime. We support the police in this initiative.

Question 4: *What does good neighbourhood policing look like?*

Question 5: *Are PCSOs as effective in making people feel safe, or do the additional powers of the police make people feel safer?*

Question 6: *Are there any local innovations that we could learn from?*

Question 7: *Given the changing nature of policing, how should neighbourhood policing – ie where police officers and staff are accessible responsible to communities, engage and build trust with their communities and cooperate to solve problems – adapt and what are the key partnerships to tackle crime?*

Question 8: *Do you support the establishment of a new national agency for cybercrime? Would a wider reorganisation of police forces help them address the changing demands of 21st century policing?*

Question 9: *Do you support additional investment in the National Crime Agency to tackle serious organised crimes?*

4. Non-crime demands on the police

4.1.1 To give police more time and resources both to respond more effectively to crime, and to carry out preventative community policing, **we are looking at how to reduce other demands on officers' time – especially mental health crisis and missing persons.**

4.1.2 Inadequate mental health services leave them effectively having to act as mental health first responders, often taking them away from their beat for hours. Liberal Democrats have a proud record of campaigning for proper investment in mental health services and this would reduce the pressure on police. In government, we expanded access to talking therapies and introduced the first-ever waiting time standards for treatment. Initiatives by our Health Minister Norman Lamb – for example the crisis care concordat between the NHS and police – led to greater co-operation and better understanding by officers and medics. We want to build on this record.

4.1.3 There is a live question about how much the police should be involved in dealing with people in crisis: in what circumstances – if any – is it appropriate for the police to be involved? There are two very different types of approach that we might take to this, and we would welcome opinions from party members on which we should adopt:

- **Accept there is a role for the police in dealing with mental health crisis**, but that they need to be better supported by mental health professionals. The working group has considered the practice of "street triage" which is being piloted by nine police services. In these pilots, mental health professionals provide on the spot advice – including opinions on a person's condition, or appropriate information sharing about a person's health history – to police officers who are dealing with people with possible mental health problems. This approach seems to improve the way in which police handle cases of crisis but is very

labour intensive. This problem could be addressed by having local mental health workers permanently available to support police in this way remotely. Or,

- **Decide that the police should not be involved with cases of mental health crisis**. Police don't have the training to deal properly with mental health crisis and it is costly and undesirable to deliver a widespread training programme. The police have an instinct to restrain people and this can make matters worse. Paramedics or mental health professionals are better placed to properly deal with these cases. Likewise, commissioning healthcare for people in police custody should be done by the NHS.

4.1.4 Missing persons is another huge source of demand on police time and has increased in the past year. Part of the demand is from care homes and foster parents: a large number of children go missing from care and many children repeatedly go missing – some as many as 60 times in a year. The problem is exacerbated by care homes and foster parents – understandably – reporting it to the police very quickly. While we are interested in hearing a range of ideas on this issue, we are inclined to tackle this problem by looking at what's making children go missing and offering greater support to them while they are in care.

4.1.5 Many police forces are developing initiatives at a local level that are successful in dealing with the changing demands placed on their time. It is important that police are able to effectively share best practice across forces. Our policy should support them to do this.

Question 10: *How involved should the police should be in attending cases of mental health crisis? Do you prefer the approach in 4.1.3 (a) or (b)?*

Question 11: *What is the best way to address "missing persons" cases, especially in relation to children in care?*

5. Young people and youth services

5.1.1 Young people are particularly affected by the rise of violent crime. We support a public health approach to youth violence based on the World Health Organisation's principle of treating violence like a disease and responding with a whole-systems approach. This approach has been effective in Glasgow, where the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit has an arms' length relationship with Police Scotland and pursues precisely this approach to knife crime. The public health approach means working with those in the health, education and social work to tackle the problem. In the case of young people, it is important to address links between violence – both as victim and perpetrator – and trauma or adverse childhood experiences.

5.1.2 This approach also means intervening in a constructive way when people are caught up in knife crime. The working group has considered the example of RedThread, a charity that has embedded social workers in four London hospitals to prevent youth violence. They emphasise to the young person that they are in a safe place, help identify others who might be at risk from knife crime and work with the young person to establish safety plans – ensuring that they feel safe returning home. RedThread's success clearly demonstrates the value of youth workers intervening at this key stage and we want to explore how to provide funds for local authorities or charities to support more young people in this way and help prevent them falling into the cycle of crime.

5.1.3 We are especially supportive of diversion schemes for young people and believe that every local police service should have a youth diversion scheme in place: currently a third of forces do not. A proportion of young people will inevitably make mistakes, do things that are illegal and get caught. For the vast majority of crimes, landing young people with criminal records only serves to entrench their view of themselves as a criminal and increases the likelihood of reoffending.

Diversion is especially important in those communities that are over-policed.

5.1.4 We do not, however, think that this is an area in which national government should be overly restrictive. We support interventions whereby the local police force immediately refers young offenders to a non-criminal justice agency so that their initial contact with the police is also their last. This is the most effective way to handle youth diversion, as it requires substantial investment in other agencies. At the other end of the spectrum are some areas, like Durham, where the police are used for diversion: this represents a further demand on police time and – worse – is not necessarily as helpful for the young people. We would make funding available for local non-criminal justice agencies and promote the benefits of this approach to areas that rely on the police for youth diversion.

Question 12: *Do you know of any examples of effective youth diversion or deferred prosecution schemes?*

Question 13: *Where are there good examples of addressing and reducing youth violence?*

6. Diversity and inequality

6.1.1 Crime has a greater impact on those in society who are already negatively impacted by inequality: both in the sense that they are more likely to be victims of crime and in the sense that the harm caused is usually greater.

6.1.2 Inequality increases people's vulnerability to crime in a variety of ways. The poorest in society are at increased risk of being victims of crime – often because they live in the poorer parts of the country where crime is more prevalent. The elderly are at increased risk of fraud, and violent crime against the elderly has increased alarmingly. The LGBT+ community are still likely to be victims of hate crime – particularly transgender people. Increasing the number of police officers and ensuring that they have more time to focus on crime prevention will go some way to tackling these issues.

6.1.3 There is a lack of trust of the police among some communities – especially black communities. Grievances over policing tactics – especially the disproportionate use of Stop and Search, whereby you are more than nine times more likely to be stopped and searched if you are black than if you are white, even though you are less likely to be in possession of drugs – have a hugely negative bearing on trust. There is a perception that the police service is institutionally racist and – if policing is going to be effective in all communities – this problem needs to be addressed.

6.1.4 We have also looked at hate crime under this heading: when people are targeted because of their race, religion or sexual orientation or because they are disabled or transgender this causes a great deal of harm both to the individuals involved as well as the wider community. This comes across clearly in the Crime Survey, where 89% of victims report themselves as being emotionally affected by the crime (compared to 77% for other types of crime) and 25% describe themselves as "very much affected" (compared to 8% for other types of

crime). The number of hate crimes is increasing. In England and Wales, over the past year 94,000 people reported a hate crime (compared to, eg, 8,400 reported in the US and 1,500 in France). This represents about half of the incidents of hate crime reported in the Crime Survey, indicating that people increasingly feel confident enough in the system to report hate crime.

6.1.5 Tackling hate crime is challenging from a policy perspective, but there are things that can be done. Awareness raising is important and organisations that campaign to end hate crime need to be supported. Where the media and others in the public sphere are guilty of stereotyping or demagoguery, we need to be tireless in challenging them. When there are terrorist incidents – or anything else that is likely to cause a spike in hate crimes – it is important that the police are able to react quickly. Rumour spreads quickly after such incidents and these exacerbate the situation. For example after the Westminster terrorist attack in 2017 a photograph spread of a Muslim woman who seemed unconcerned by the attack and this spread, causing further anger. We must support the police – or other agencies – to respond promptly to counter this type of narratives before they can take hold.

Question 14: How else might we protect the vulnerable from crime?

Question 15: How can we help rebuild trust in the police in black and minority ethnic communities?

Question 16: What else should the working group consider in order to tackle hate crime?

7. Technology and privacy

7.1.1 The development of new technology gives the police access to a range of new tools that can be used to combat crime: CCTV and face-recognition software can be used to identify those who have committed crimes; advances in forensic technology, such as for investigating road collisions, help bring closure to the families of victims; the prevalence of data can help police find missing people; and developments in surveillance technology can help the police to prevent crime. While it is important the police are able to make effective use of this sort of technology, we believe that this must not come at the cost of individual liberty: a person's right to privacy should not be breached lightly and it is vitally important that new police powers are regulated and subject to oversight.

7.1.2 The Liberal Democrats opposed the Investigatory Powers Act, passed by the Conservatives and Labour in 2016, which gave the police the power to hack computers and develop bulk personal datasets. The courts have ruled that the police should only have your itemised phone bill, a record of where you've been with your mobile phone or which websites you've been looking at on the internet if they're investigating serious crime. We believe that this approach represents the right balance between enabling the police to investigate crime while respecting the right to privacy. The Conservatives, by contrast, have sought to get round this by re-defining serious crime as any offence that involves communication – opening the way to widespread abuse of liberties.

7.1.3 There is a range of new technology being rolled out by the police currently. It is important that trails of new technology are carried with local democratic consent and that their use has proper oversight. At present this is not happening. Facial recognition is being increasingly used, including at protests: this matches live images of people to a watch list, many of whom have never been convicted of any crime. IMSI-catchers can be used to locate all switched-on mobile phones at a

protest or public event by mimicking mobile phone towers – tricking phones into connecting with them and revealing personal data. And, as machine learning and AI develops, there will doubtless be an increase in the use of algorithms to predict future criminal behaviour. While, used sensitively, this might be beneficial for early – non criminal-justice – intervention, there is a huge risk that it will entrench existing inequalities.

Question 17: *What technology options for the police should be developed and expanded, and are there examples of technology that you think the police should never use?*

Question 18: *How should we ensure that there is democratic consent and proper oversight for any new technology?*

8. Supporting the police

8.1.1 It has been a difficult period for people who work in the police. Police officers – whether attending the scenes of road accidents and violent crimes or supporting the victims of domestic abuse or sexual assaults – are hugely impressive in dealing with emotional and troubling situations with professionalism and empathy. Yet, they have been under siege from a hostile Conservative government that is relentlessly critical while slashing the resources that they need to do their work. **Liberal Democrats want to support the police, show them that their work is valued and ensure that they have the skills and support that they need to carry their challenging work.**

8.1.2 The modern police service requires people with a wide range of skills, it needs: programmers and tech-literate people to tackle the rise in cybercrime; officers who are skilled in partnership-working, who can lead collaborative preventative programmes; people who can communicate effectively and compassionately; and assertiveness and resilience. We can help the police attract people with the required skills by ensuring that they are properly funded and that staff are paid an appropriate amount. However, more could be done in terms of training existing staff or investing in recruiting people with especially in-demand skills. We are considering whether police services should be looking to recruit a greater number of graduates, or whether what is needed is an overhaul in the training programme for new officers.

8.1.3 It is especially important that we tackle poor mental and wellbeing among police officers. Research by Mind has suggested that 91% of police officers have experienced stress and mental health at work. This is much higher than for the general population, but they are also far less likely to take time off from work as a result, meaning that many of the police continue being exposed to stressful situations without properly addressing their mental health. This can put tremendous strain on relationships and impact their ability to do their jobs. We must ensure that the mental health of police officers is a

priority, so that they can do their work effectively and aren't forced to sacrifice their wellbeing.

Question 19: *Do you – or anyone you know – have experience of working in the police? If so, what can be done to support officers more effectively? Are there any lessons that can be learned from other high-stress environments, such as the armed forces?*

Question 20: *What can be done to attract people with in-demand skills, especially programmers, to the police? What should the balance be between recruiting graduates and training new officers?*

Question 21: *How can we ensure the mental health and wellbeing of the police?*