



House of Commons
Welsh Affairs Committee

**Current restructuring
of the police forces in
Wales: Government
response to the
Committee's Fifth
Report of Session
2005–06**

**Seventh Special Report of Session
2005–06**

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed Tuesday 31 October 2006*

HC 1695
Published Thursday 16 November 2006
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£0.00

The Welsh Affairs Committee

The Welsh Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales (including relations with the National Assembly for Wales).

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The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/welsh_affairs_committee.cfm.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Nick Wright (Clerk), Stephen Boyce (Committee Specialist), Jane Trew (Committee Assistant), Sarah Colebrook (Secretary) and Jim Lawford (Senior Office Clerk).

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Seventh Special Report

The Committee published its Fifth Report of Session 2005–06, *Current restructuring of the police forces in Wales* on Thursday 27 July 2006. The response from the Home Office was received on 16 October 2006 and is published as the Appendix to this Report.

Appendix

1. There remain a number of serious concerns over the financial arrangements for any new all Wales police force. The financial forecasts drawn up by the Chief Constables, and the inability of the Police Minister to fully allay their fears does not fill us with confidence in the financial viability of any all Wales police force. Until the Minister demonstrates beyond any doubt that an all Wales police force will be financially viable, in the medium to long term, we will not be able to support the proposals. (paragraph 22)

2. We conclude that an all Wales police force is no longer a credible option. (paragraph 24)

The Government notes the Committee's view. The Home Secretary announced on 19 June that the Government did not intend to press ahead with enforced mergers of police forces and the notices of intention to merge which were issued on 3 March by the then Home Secretary to forces in Wales have been withdrawn.

On 31 July, the Minister for Policing, Security and Community Safety, Tony McNulty, wrote to all police forces and police authorities in England and Wales setting out the way forward on protective services and inviting them to develop proposals on how to improve protective services. Tony McNulty is engaged in ongoing dialogue with the Welsh forces and police authorities on this issue.

HMIC will set the benchmarks for the standards to be achieved and monitor progress on their delivery.

3. Nonetheless, last year the four Welsh police forces were presented with a fait accompli to plan and organise for an all Wales force. Despite their concerns, they worked towards that end. Those efforts, and the resources committed to achieve that goal, appear to have been wasted. It would be wholly unacceptable for the four Welsh forces to suffer financially as a result of that wasted expenditure. We recommend that the Home Office ensures that the resources expended by the four Welsh forces on this failed policy in no way affects their financial planning for the current financial year. We expect a clear commitment to that effect from the Home Office in its response to this report. (paragraph 25)

The Government is grateful for the work which police forces and police authorities in Wales did to prepare for the possibility of merger. Much of this work will be useful as forces work together to improve protective services.

On 24 July the Home Office wrote to police forces and police authorities to indicate that the Government would be prepared to make a contribution to the additional costs which

they had incurred in preparing for mergers. An announcement on how we propose to settle the claims for the additional costs will be made shortly.