

**Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively
the police deal with protests**

RESPONSE OF DAVID KEANE, POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR CHESHIRE

In these unprecedented times, we have seen people motivated to show their solidarity with others, such as the Black Lives Matter movement and in response to the tragic murder of Sarah Everard. I recognise the right to protest is a vital part of our democracy and believe we should uphold this in balance with keeping the public safe noting the additional complexities of the current pandemic. I share concerns that many have expressed about the Police, Crime and Sentencing bill and the impact this will have not only on our long established right to protest but also on the impacts on operational policing. I believe strongly in the principle of the policing by consent and that any legislation should reinforce this principle and should help foster better relations between the police and all of our communities in the interests of public safety.

Policing protests are not just a concern for Metropolitan forces. I have sought reassurance that we are able to respond fairly and intelligently to any protest requiring a police presence. I therefore welcome the review carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services 'Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests' dated 11th March 2021 which does not reference Cheshire but does offer recommendations to Constabularies.

An action plan has been developed by Constabulary in response to the recommendations in the report and I am pleased to learn that all recommendations are already being progressed with rigorous governance. The Constabulary have reassured me that work has commenced to improve the quality of protest-related intelligence, and that a strategic risk assessment is underway to ensure any event is adequately resourced. Further work is ongoing to fully understand how public order affects our communities and the current de-briefing procedure is being expanded.

Where local matters arise, I will be asking the Chief Constable to consult with me in advance of any known protests where possible so that the independent protest monitors can be deployed to provide independent feedback on how the event was managed. I will also require a full debrief afterwards.

It is imperative that the human rights of those who participate in protests these are not compromised during any response. It is also imperative that those who participate, and the wider public, are kept safe at all times. Police officers involved in public order regularly place themselves in harm's way to keep the public safe and we must not lose sight of their hard work and professionalism in doing so.



David Keane
Police & Crime Commissioner
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