



Home Office

Baroness Williams

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BY EMAIL ONLY
Lord Paddick
House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

17 November 2021

Dear Brian,

**POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL: SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY
- COMMITTEE STAGE**

Following the Committee debate on 27 October (Official Report, columns 824-830), I thought it would be helpful to write to you all to provide further detail on the role we envisage for local policing bodies as part of the Serious Violence Duty.

First, I would like to set out why the Government believes that the provisions under clause 13 are necessary. Local policing bodies have an important role to play in convening partner agencies. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC), as elected local policing bodies, are the voice of the local community in relation to policing and crime. This is reflected in their current functions in relation to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). They are responsible for the totality of policing in their force area, as well as services for victims of crime, and will therefore have shared objectives in relation to the prevention and reduction of serious violence. That is why this clause provides local policing bodies with a discretionary role in supporting specified authorities with the preparation and implementation of their strategies as well as monitoring their effectiveness and impact on local serious violence levels. I would also like to add that the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) were consulted on this provision as the legislation was drafted and are supportive of the approach.

Turning to your question regarding why it is necessary to include statutory provision for a discretionary role. Whilst it is true that many PCCs already do contribute to efforts concerning local crime prevention, this provision will ensure that all such bodies are in no doubt about the contribution they are able to make to local efforts to prevent and reduce serious violence specifically.

Furthermore, PCCs and MOPAC both have functions which are limited to those in statute. They do have incidental powers set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, however, those powers are limited to actions which are

“calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of” their functions. In order for them to undertake functions which are specific to the Duty it is, therefore, necessary to confer those functions on them.

I note the additional concerns you raised regarding leadership for the Duty. I would like to clarify that we envisage the role of local policing bodies to be one which provides additional support to the specified authorities with the development and implementation of local strategies, as and when this is required. In order to engender a true multi-agency approach, we believe that it is essential that all authorities subject to the Duty are jointly accountable, as opposed to a single authority bearing all responsibility for the success of the partnership.

Finally, I would like to provide some further clarification on the points made by Lord Rosser in respect of CSPs. It is true that CSPs are not the only structure that draws together the statutory partners, but as an established multi-agency partnership in local authority areas, they have a vital role to play in ensuring that violence reduction strategies are in place at a local level. That is why, in addition to creating a new Duty, clause 19 amends the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to include a requirement for CSPs to have in place a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence. Such a strategy would meet the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty if all relevant partners specified in the legislation are involved in its development and implementation. We also recognise that the geographical reach of CSPs might mean they are not the optimum partnership model in all areas to deliver on the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty, which is why we have intentionally built in flexibility to allow local areas to choose the most appropriate multi-agency structure for this purpose.

The legislation will also create the conditions for CSPs to strengthen links with structures operating at a higher strategic level, such as Violence Reduction Units (VRUs), to ensure that there is better join-up across police force and regional areas, particularly where a number of CSPs co-exist in the locality. We would also expect CSPs to benefit from the capabilities, insights and broader work of VRUs, such as in assisting them to build a greater understanding of the local problem profile with improved information and data sharing.

Finally, I would like to reassure you that we are aware of the importance of funding in ensuring that this Duty can be delivered successfully. Following the recent outcome of the Spending Review, the Government has committed to investing £150 million a year to continue and expand programmes that prevent crime and keep our communities safe. Further detail on the funding allocations will be set out later this year.

I hope that this letter provides you all with sufficient clarity and reassurance on the matters raised in respect of this clause in the Bill.

I am copying this letter to Lord Rosser, Lord Coaker, Lord Falconer, Lord Bach and Baroness Chakrabarti. I am also placing a copy in the library of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

Baroness Williams of Trafford
Minister of State