

UNISON Response to the Call for Evidence on the Scrutiny of the Scottish Government's Draft Justice Budget 2014-2015.

Introduction

UNISON would like to thank the Justice Committee for the opportunity to submit evidence to their scrutiny of the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014-2015.

UNISON represents the majority of Police Staff employed by the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and will comment on Chapter 6-Justice as this relates directly to the SPA Budget allocation.

Background

The budget allocation is in line with UNISON's expectations of the planned budget. We expected the overall budget for Policing to decrease to a detrimental level in line with that given in the Outline Business Case (OBC) for Police and Fire Reform.

UNISON has previously stated that the expectations of budgetary savings which could be achieved through reform were overblown and unachievable without severely impacting on the efficiency of the service and, in particular, on the employment prospects of thousands of Police Staff. It gives us no great pleasure to say that our predictions have come true.

Due to the fact that estimated savings and thereafter, the draft budget proposals for 2014/15 are based on the OBC and not a Detailed Business Case (DBC), there are unrealistic expectations on what can be achieved in the timescales given. UNISON had called several times for a DBC to be carried out, in line with Treasury Green Book principles (Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government).

If this exercise had been carried out, anomalies which are evident in the OBC would have been highlighted and corrected and would have resulted in a more realistic and achievable budget proposal for policing.

Reform and de-civilianisation

In UNISON's view, the Police and Fire Reform Exercise has also been rushed.

This has resulted in structural reform proposals within Police Scotland (PS) which are purely designed to reduce costs and meet the unrealistic budget. These proposals are not the most efficient nor offer best value to the Service and therefore the people of Scotland.

It has, in effect, meant that a massive de-civilianisation exercise is in full swing. Structural proposals are being consulted on at present which means that large groups of Police Staff posts are being deleted although the work in

those areas remains. This work will be carried out by Police Officers, already stretched in their duties and effectively taking them from active policing.

Not only that, the restructuring is being carried out in isolation, with little synergy or long term planning. Assumptions are being made around systems or procedures which may or may not be in place rather than establishing a cohesive, structured and modernised organisation.

Police reform was meant to identify efficiencies through reductions in duplication of posts. Again, the proposals currently being consulted on are purely designed to save budget, not reduce duplication. The proposals involve mainly local services, with Police Staff directly involved in the community, who are being sacrificed to maintain Police Officer numbers at an artificially high number.

There has been no indication that detailed work has been carried out to establish the number of officers required to police Scotland. The Chair of the SPA announced that this work was to go ahead shortly after his appointment, however nothing has been forthcoming. Nor has any work been carried out to establish how effective this figure is in maintaining low crime figures. As a case in point, hundreds of Police Officers were involved in the creation of the Single Force with no apparent detriment to the effectiveness of the Force. UNISON has consistently highlighted areas of the organisation which have been backfilled by Police Officers to allow staff to be released on Voluntary Redundancy or Early Retirement (VR/ER).

1000 extra Police Officers was a policy supported by political parties of all sides when it was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in 2009. However, this decision was taken pre-austerity. UNISON believes it is now time to look closely at the *Total Workforce Requirement* of Police Scotland to ensure a balanced workforce; the correct types of Staff or Officers carrying out roles appropriate to their qualifications and needs of the organisation. This would fulfil the requirement of the Police and Fire Reform Bill for the SPA and PS to provide Best Value. Current proposals do not meet that obligation.

As previously stated in evidence giving sessions, much of the rationalisation of posts and reduction in duplication comes from commonality of IT systems. Even though the provision for IT in the OBC was shown by PS to be inadequate, no further allowance appears to have been made in this budget to take this into account. I6 is acknowledged however there are many other systems which do not come under the span of I6 such as Command and Control.

Similarly, the need for partnership working in the Justice sphere will take a considerable amount of time and planning with commonality of both procedural and IT systems required. There will be efficiencies in such systems, however, the planning required for this to happen is substantial and poor decisions made now will have a negative impact, not only on how the police deliver outcomes, but also those of other partners.

Conclusion

Much has been made of the apparent success of the implementation of the Single Scottish Force with the chair of the SPA stating that this should be a model for others to follow. However this public sector reform differs from others in that one major part of the workforce, Police Officers, have been ring fenced to the detriment of others. This flaw does not allow flexibility to management to make the right Best Value decisions to make an effective, efficient, modern police force for Scotland.

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