House of Commons
Home Affairs Committee

Reform of the Police Federation: Government Response to the Committee’s Eighteenth Report of Session 2013–14

Second Special Report of Session 2014–15

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Home Affairs Committee

The Home Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Home Office and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP (Labour, Leicester East) (Chair)
Ian Austin MP (Labour, Dudley North)
Nicola Blackwood MP (Conservative, Oxford West and Abingdon)
James Clappison MP (Conservative, Hertsmere)
Michael Ellis MP (Conservative, Northampton North)
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Dr Julian Huppert MP (Liberal Democrat, Cambridge)
Yasmin Qureshi MP (Labour, Bolton South East)
Mark Reckless MP (Conservative, Rochester and Strood)
Mr David Winnick MP (Labour, Walsall North)

The following were also members of the Committee during the Parliament.

Rt Hon Alun Michael (Labour & Co-operative, Cardiff South and Penarth)
Karl Turner MP (Labour, Kingston upon Hull East)
Steve McCabe MP (Labour, Birmingham Selly Oak)
Bridget Phillipson MP (Labour, Houghton and Sunderland South)
Chris Ruane MP (Labour, Vale of Clwyd)

Powers

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

Publication

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/homeaffairscom

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Tom Healey (Clerk), John-Paul Flaherty (Second Clerk), Dr Ruth Martin (Committee Specialist), Duma Langton (Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Senior Committee Assistant), Iwona Hankin (Committee Assistant) and Alex Paterson (Select Committee Media Officer).

Contacts

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Second Special Report

On 16 May 2014 The Home Affairs Committee published its Eighteenth Report of Session 2014–15, Reform of the Police Federation (HC 1163). The Government’s response to the Report was received on 9 July 2014, and is published as an Appendix to this Special Report.

Appendix: Government response

Letter from Rt Hon Theresa May MP, Home Secretary, 9 July 2014

I welcome the Home Affairs Committee’s report on reform of the Federation and fully support the conclusions, especially in commending the outgoing leadership of the Federation for commissioning this important review in the first place. I too have been very concerned about the impact of revelations about the Federation on public confidence and on the perception of the police as a whole.

In respect of the recommendations, a large number of them fall to the Federation to consider. Following their commitment to reform at their Conference, I am sure they will be looking very carefully at them. I set out my thoughts below.

It is clear that the Committee is in much the same place I am, and I hope - especially following the clear messages I gave at their Conference - that the Federation will rise to the challenge that has been put to them to reform.

Recommendation 1 - that reserves be used to fund a subscription rebate

I agree that it is not right for the Federation to have built up the reserves set out in your report. Whilst I have said I will stop all public funding, they should not be hoarding their members’ money in this fashion either. I agree that the money either needs to be spent in their members’ interest or returned to the membership - it is for the Federation to decide which and to justify that decision to their members.

Recommendation 2 - that all accounts be published

I agree that a lack of transparency when holding other people’s money is unacceptable. I know that the central Federation has already published their accounts and have sent me a copy, following their Conference. I hope that the Federation branches will do the same very quickly. As I announced at the Conference, I have formally exercised my powers to request a copy of all branch accounts and will publish them myself if the branches fail to do so. As I also set out at Conference, some branches have been reluctant to act, and I intend to strengthen my powers to call in accounts to ensure that can never happen again. Transparency will be further supported by bringing the Federation within the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.
Reform of the Police Federation: Government Response

Recommendation 3 - that the Federation adopt an amended core purpose

As you will now know, following my speech to the Federation Conference the leadership called an emergency session that tabled a motion to agree to all the Normington recommendations, including the revised purpose, which was approved by a vast majority. I am very pleased that they have acted on this important recommendation.

Recommendation 4 - that a national election be held for the Chair

I agree that the accusations of unacceptable behaviour at the heart of the Federation are very troubling and such behaviour must be stopped. I also agree that giving a clear mandate to the Chair is a step towards this. I hope that the Federation will act on this recommendation as soon as possible.

Recommendation 5 - that a national membership database be compiled

Again I fully agree with the Committee and the Home Office will continue to support the Federation in their compiling a national database.

Recommendation 6 - that legislation makes changes as early as possible

As I set out at the Conference, I will make the necessary changes to regulations at the earliest opportunity, taking account of the Federation’s progress on the detail of the reforms.

Recommendation 7 - the compulsory nature of membership means that legislation should make changes if the Federation do not

I announced at the Conference that membership of the Federation will no longer be compulsory. It cannot be right that whatever the Federation do they can guarantee their membership- and often their subscriptions. I am also changing the law so that subscriptions can only be taken from those who actively choose to pay. As you will have seen, I made very clear at the Conference that I was prepared to legislate if the Federation fail to act, and that continues to be my position.

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Home Secretary
July 2014