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Blurred lines? Exploring the boundaries of authority in the new police governance framework

**Evaluation of Police and Crime Commissioners workshop.
University of Birmingham, 30th June 2014**

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- The declared sanctity of ‘operational independence’ viz. ‘democratic policing’
- PCCs as threat to this principle, increasing perceptions of the partisan politicisation of policing?
- ‘Solution’ said to be segregation of the ‘strategic’ from the ‘operational’ > the ‘what’ from the ‘how’
- Chief’s discretion to ‘direct and control’ enshrined in the ‘Policing Protocol’ (constrained by ‘strategic objectives’)

Operational independence as a focal point for ACPO opposition



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‘Even the perception that the police service ... is under any political influence, I think that suggests you cannot argue that you are a proper democratic society... Every chief officer fully understands the need to be held accountable. We must be operationally independent in terms of how we deliver policing. We should not be influenced by anyone who has any potential or suggestion for a political basis... I would not be surprised to see chief officers not want to be part of a system where they can be told how to deliver policing’ (Sir Hugh Orde, 20/11/09)

How might the design of the PCC model foster greater interference?



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- Imperatives of the political business cycle
- A figure-head for local policing e.g. incoming complaints from public (i.e. perceived responsibility)
- The ‘democratic voice’ of the people (i.e. perceived entitlement) cf. Peel’s ‘impartiality to the law’
- Single-office holder with executive and governance functions, subject to few checks on use of authority
- The need to maintain an ‘efficient’ / ‘effective’ force – relevant to *how* things get done

What do we know of how this issue has been playing out in practice? (1)



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- Demarcation of roles and responsibilities being locally forged (National Audit Office, 2014: 6)
- Tensions and uncertainty over how the ‘operational’ and the ‘strategic’ should be divided – a blurred line
- Wide scope for interpretation (e.g. closure of police stations, resource deployment, etc)
- Criticisms have arisen of PCCs ‘over-stepping’ the boundaries of their authority

What do we know of how this issue has been playing out in practice? (2)



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21:34
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09:33

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In reply to @nickherbertmp

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 **Katy Bourne**
@KatyBourne

@OPinkney @CInspPipTaylor Plse respond @nickherbertmp MT @prbod illegal rave continuing at Devils Dyke disturbing peace South Downs villages

25/05/2014 09:17

Reply to Katy Bourne, CoPaCC, Oliz2.

Timelines Notifications Messages Me

What do we know of how this issue has been playing out in practice? (3)



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- Operational independence' invoked to deflect criticism (e.g. 'it's an operational matter')?
- Less so when PCCs encroaching on 'operational' matters (i.e. 'my job [is] to respond to public')?
- Some PCCs appear more circumspect than others (cf. their institutional background / expertise)
- PCCs stuck between a rock and hard place (i.e. respect police discretion / represent public interest)?

- The emergence of ‘crime-fighting’ duo’s – ‘in it together’ (see Mulligan, 2013: 25)
- Chief constables at risk of becoming ‘subordinate and obedient’ to PCCs (Turner, 2014: 17)?
- ‘Operational independence’ as locally negotiated, but still steered by the centre (e.g. ‘*crime fighters*’)?
- A bounded concept – discretion constrained by wider ‘strategic’ choices of *political* import