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The Safest Place

Speech to the summit on 'Strategies to Engage the Community', Ottawa

Introduction

Firstly, can I begin by saying thank you, for the incredible opportunity of speaking at this important summit; in this great city in this truly beautiful and positive country.

I know that this summit's overall aim is 'to engage in a dialogue on the future of policing and public safety in Canada and to provide practical information on lessons learned through reforms, innovations and partnerships involving a multiplicity of organisations...' but, with fewer words it is essentially about how to make Canada the 'safest place in the world.'

This then is essentially where I begin. I want to make *my* part, of *my* country, 'the safest place'.

Radical reform in a very traditional setting

I stand before you today as one of a new breed: as a Police and Crime Commissioner. The creation of our first directly elected Commissioners in England and Wales took place in November 2012.

This was a remarkably radical reform in a country renowned for its constitutional stability and in a policing sector with a reputation for being traditional, conservative, and conventional. I think it remains one of the

most exciting innovations internationally for policing and more widely for creating safer communities.

In a country recognised in many ways as the cradle of modern democracy, there was surprising opposition to direct electoral accountability for policing.

Apparently politicians like myself were going to corrupt policing, degrade operational independence, erode public trust, skew policing to their own political advantage, exercise flagrant self-interest and short-termism for their own electoral gain.

So, why did the changes in England and Wales take place? The system they replaced was meant to be based on a balanced so-called tripartite system: there was central government, which theoretically set broad national policy; local Police Authorities who theoretically represented local people and set local priorities, and Chief Constables.

The reality was the balance simply wasn't there; in short the local direct accountability was weak and ineffective. The public were not engaged in any meaningful way.

Local Police Authorities were virtually invisible and they had little effect. Committees of well-meaning part-time amateurs, turning up for committees a handful of times a year, were in an impossibly weak position to exercise any real governance set against a full-time expert executive of senior police officers.

Government micro-managed with short-term performance targets; Chief Constables ran the show; Police Authorities sat cosily and largely ineffectually on the sidelines. In the force I now govern, the senior officers used to write the Police Authorities annual plan and the Authority

rubber stamped it; the force used to develop the budget and the Authority rubber stamped it.

National politicians occasionally expressed frustration at what they saw as the last unreformed public service, but lacked the courage to boldly put the customer – communities and victims – in the driving seat, which is the only thing that could truly transform it. Until the reform of Police and Crime Commissioners came along, that is.

Now, Police and Crime Commissioners set the strategy for policing in our localities, we set and agree the budget with tax raising powers, we hire and potentially fire our chief constables and we sit at the heart of the local criminal justice system, representing the public, speaking on behalf of victims of crime and at the same time becoming the energy to change the system and make it better.

Described simultaneously as both a ‘once-in-a-generation opportunity to effect real change’ and as ‘a calamitous change that threatens to undermine police independence’, the one certainty is that the Police and Crime Commissioners are being watched.

If we get this right, this is a reform which will not only deliver real change for local communities through reducing crime, but will also inject a change of pace across public service reform and reshape the very notion of local accountability.

But to me this is not a moment for taking small tentative steps.

Bigger than just the police

The 'policing' bit of the title is relatively straight forward. The 'and crime' bit is not, but that is what is most exciting about my role. True reform, truly seeing issues through the eyes of the public and victims, needs to transcend a single agency.

It isn't possible to be transformational one agency at a time, nor is it possible to achieve big objectives if we simply think in agency silos.

Nothing will be achieved if we think one profession at a time or if we put 'the good of the service' before achieving goals for the public.

The role could have simply been created as a Police Commissioner, however the 'and crime' concept is a transformational one.

Much of what needs to be undertaken to achieve big falls in crime sits beyond core policing. I have chosen to interpret the 'and crime' aspect of my role boldly and broadly.

It needs to cover criminal justice and community safety, drugs and alcohol, early intervention and prevention activities, enhancing wellbeing, galvanising local communities in cultural change to tackle the root causes of crime.

There is strong evidence which illustrates the relationships between crime and health, wellbeing, housing and education. This growing evidence base demonstrates that early intervention activity works, especially very early on with young children at risk.

Much of this essential work to create safer communities isn't about police working alone; making this all happen needs to involve conversations and engagement well beyond the policing profession. In other words, truly visionary thinking about policing looks a long way beyond the police.

For most of us working in and around the criminal justice system, this is common knowledge, but both the opportunity to think differently and the greater freedom to act that being a Commissioner has brought brings real fresh opportunity to put such ideas into effect, rather than just plodding along with the same tired, clunky and reactive criminal justice system.

To be honest, the criminal justice 'system' that I inherited as a Commissioner in 2012 was not really a system at all.

It was a series of largely autonomous organisations and loosely aligned partnerships, plagued with a mess of differing priorities, targets and funding streams and lacking collective leadership.

Ask the senior managers gathered around our Local Criminal Justice Board or attending one of our multi-agency Community Safety Partnerships, 'who is ultimately responsible for the overall experience of victims of crime?' Not one hand will go up.

Ask them who is ultimately responsible for managing local offenders? For reducing crime? For protecting neighbourhoods or tackling drugs? For changing cultures around drinking, or hate crime, or domestic abuse?

Everybody, and yet Nobody.

Police and Crime Commissioners change all that. I see myself as personally responsible for each of those things.

New ambitions and settling in

New beginnings are hard work, but they give us the opportunity of creating very exciting new things.

Setting ambitious targets; stretching thinking; encouraging people who are very set in their ways to think differently; move beyond an engrained culture of always doing things a certain way; raising levels of expectation about what we could achieve on our journey towards creating the 'safest place' were all viewed as particularly problematic initially.

In my first Police and Crime Plan I set a target to reduce violence by 40% over five years and spoke of 'eradicating drugs'. Such ambition and boldness felt very new and took a bit of getting used to.

The consensus at first was that my sense of ambition was unhelpful, setting people up to fail and risking morale. Policing is complicated, perhaps I just didn't really understand? In my first year, the most

common thing I was accused of was being "too ambitious". I took that as a compliment.

That was at first. Things are very much better now. My Chief Constable and his force have in many ways responded magnificently; they have grown to understand what I was trying to achieve. The agenda I have set out requires the force to radically change, instead of just tweaking a few processes here or adding some new structures. This was never going to be easy. Hearts and minds take a long time to be won over.

Importantly I have also learnt from them. I understand that I will not achieve big changes without force leaders delivering with me; their expertise, their experience, their immense passion and commitment for what they do. The challenge is essentially taking people on that journey with you.

New formations

In Northamptonshire, I am operationally integrating our police and fire services. In exploring this I am demonstrating the possibilities for new partnering that moves beyond some of the traditional public sector boundaries and barriers that for so long have stifled innovation.

The ambition is to deliver the most effective, efficient services which meet the differing needs of communities. The public will continue to receive high standards of service, but we will save valuable resource to sustain the frontline. It will also mean emergency calls are only handled once; resources are allocated in the most effective way and commanded in a more joined up manner.

The future of redesigning emergency services is truly pioneering. Integrated leadership will create an environment in which new, informed thinking about the future of service delivery could take place, in one room, with one budget. For those on the front-line, this is the best way to prioritise and preserve the vital services they provide to our residents.

Central to our thinking therefore is community engagement and prevention. This is not just about getting smarter at emergency response; it is about getting smarter at reducing the demand for that emergency response.

Northamptonshire's Fire and Rescue Service has provided policing with an excellent example of how to manage down demand, through effective prevention. The clear and welcome fall in fire deaths are about better building design, fire alarms, fire resistant materials and the like, more than they have been about refinements in blue light response or increase in front-line service resources.

This clearly demonstrates that prevention is better than response.

Putting victims at the heart

I have also been extremely passionate about giving a voice to victims, witnesses, service users and communities, to help best design a criminal justice system that meets their needs and expectations.

We know that services achieve better outcomes if they are properly designed around the people they are meant to serve and if their expectations are properly managed.

Delivering on this has been an interesting experience. The first decision I took as Police and Crime Commissioner was to establish a Victims' Commission which was led by an independent chair. The resultant 'Victims' Voice' consultation heard the views and experiences of over 1000 victims and witnesses in Northamptonshire and conducted over 60 in depth one to one interviews.

The outcome of this work was the Victims' Voice report which represented a tremendous wakeup call and is at times an uncomfortable and distressing read. However with 79 recommendations across the entirety of the criminal justice system, there is clearly a lot for us to do.

The report describes in detail the failings and weaknesses of an essentially broken criminal justice system.

The only way to make changes will be to fundamentally rethink how the justice system works; how the police, courts, Crown Prosecution Service, probation, youth justice and victim support agencies work together, collaboratively, to provide the best possible service to victims and witnesses and ensure justice is achieved. I have taken away single agency, short-term crime reduction and process targets and created outcomes that are now meaningful for victims and for local communities.

This is an ambition that our national government also shares. It too is seeking to provide a better deal for victims and witnesses and they have recognised that a better approach would be to put decision making in the hands of local people.

It has therefore embarked on an ambitious programme of devolving support services for victims' of crime. They have given funding to Commissioners, to determine in consultation with our communities.

We are working towards giving every victim and witness a named point of contact as they enter the criminal justice system. That named point of contact will be responsible for liaising with the relevant agencies that make up the 'system' on their behalf.

They will clearly inform the victim or witness about the relevant stages throughout the process, provide reassurance, support and advice, and help ensure that their interests and rights are upheld at every stage as they navigate through the criminal justice system.

The new local service I've created called *Voice*, is independent of policing, a model which respects the wishes of victims and witnesses that we consulted with.

I have established the new position of an independent Victims Chair solely dedicated to championing the needs of victims and witnesses. We have also established a governance board which holds the whole system, including the police to account, through the eyes of victims and witnesses. Such improvements reflect a real and important shift in power locally.

Special Constables

Another reform I have been pushing forward with energy is the growth in our volunteer police officers, called Special Constables.

This is tremendously exciting as. I passionately believe that the public are the police and the police are the public.

Police officers are citizens in uniform; this never feels truer than when those officers are volunteers, serving their communities in this amazing, unique way in their spare time.

Historically in the UK, the role of Specials, our volunteer officers, has been a bit one dimensional and its role hasn't evolved or developed much. In Northamptonshire they have tended to be young, and often to be young white men, who ultimately want to have a career as a regular officers.

Their roles have changed little over the years. Specials can however contribute so much more. Therefore we are expanding our Specials to four times the current size to 1000 and we are reimagining the roles they will perform.

We are rethinking the training they need. We are embedding them as an essential part of a new operating model for our force. I believe that radically reimagining the role for volunteers has the potential to be as significant for policing as changes in technology, or in governance and structures, or in community-based problem-solving models.

Evidence Based Policy

It is fundamental that across the combined policing and criminal justice frontier we must evolve into entities that are better at being shaped by evidence.

I believe that policing has still yet to fully understand big data, to evaluate success or to translate the evidence from academics into real changes in practice.

To quote Jerry Ratcliffe, a former police officer who is now one of the world's foremost academics on intelligence in policing:

“At no time in history is law enforcement more in need of strategic direction....To be effective, law enforcement is now required to predict into the short and long term, anticipate the behaviour of crime groups, think strategically and be judicious with resource allocation. This ‘intelligent’ level of business planning has long been neglected by a police establishment fixated with tactical investigations and short-term

operational outcomes. 'Worry about tomorrow: next year is someone else's problem' has until recently been the mantra."

There can be no doubting that this needs to change as it is essential modern policing becomes more strategic in its thinking, and more evidence-based in its professional practice.

The evidence-base for creating better partnerships between justice, health and education is growing and shows significantly improved life-courses for young people where intervention is joined-up and holistic across their needs.

However, slow progress has been made, which appears to be due to silo working at both national and local levels.

Institute for Public Safety

This is why I am committed to attempting to reduce the deficit of evidence in policing and wider public services with a focus on a model of cross-sector collaboration around outcomes. With this ambition in mind I established The Institute for Public Safety, Crime and Justice.

It brings together under one roof cutting-edge academic research activity alongside practical translation of research evidence into practice.

The Institute is the first of its kind in the UK and only after one year its creation, it is now a regional hub for our new national College of Policing.

I believe this investment in evidence saves lives, supports the frontline and helps me and policy makers make the right decisions.

School-

I have also decided to see the establishment of a charter school for 1,260 learners between the ages of four and nineteen to open in my county in 2016.

The school will also seek to build-in character and values; building the resilience of children and young people; encouraging them to make better decisions, to better recognise risk, establish when they might be putting themselves in danger and to encourage them to become better citizens.

The idea is that the school won't only work with the children themselves, but also the wider family, with the aim of improving parents' skills to allow them to fully participate in their children's learning with a view to rolling out best practices into other schools around the county.

The future for the police profession

How might we recruit people into a new public service that puts protecting communities from harm as its core principle, that doesn't define the differences between Policing, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance?

We could potentially describe it as a hazardous journey and take some inspiration from the extraordinary Ernest Shackleton.

As a polar explorer who led three expeditions to the Antarctic he is probably THE principal figure in exploration ever; though often overshadowed by his rival 'Scott of the Antarctic'.

Shackleton, however, stands as an immense heroic figure for his leadership capacity and capability. He placed an advert in The Times in the early part of the 20th century recruiting and perhaps there are some parallels for us today:

'PEOPLE WANTED for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honour and recognition in case of success.'

There can be no doubt that neighbourhood policing remains the right answer, but we need to build on its strong foundations of local problem solving and local visible teams and take this to another level.

Local communities expect problems and solutions to be framed on how they see and experience them, not just the way the Police see the world.

The role of neighbourhood and community policing has always evolved and adapted with the times.

A decade ago, our communities held the view that officers with no powers of arrest were a terrible idea – our Police Community Support Officers or PCSOs - and now I regularly receive letters from my constituents telling me just how highly valued and respected they are.

Another key focus for our strategic professional future is to recognise the fundamental importance of 'service'.

Policing is in the business of delivering excellent service. It is not a special case and can still learn from the finest service organisations in the world. Part of that learning is to see through the eyes of your real customers.

All of us have chosen to be a part of the Criminal Justice System, public safety and policing; even an offender makes that choice when committing an offence; victims and witnesses have never chosen to actively participate in that process and the system should work for them.

It is all too easy at times to concentrate on the perpetrators and forget the people the system is ultimately there to serve, namely victims and witnesses.

We need to build on their experiences and improve their journey through the system and give them a much stronger say.

Policing must be seen as much bigger than the police. Local government, health and schools should play a big strategic part in reducing crime and making our communities safer places.

Police Leaders of the Future-

Finally, I want to reflect on the leadership challenges facing modern policing organisations at a strategic level. There is an argument that leadership has never been more important in policing. Never have the requirements on police leaders shifted so fast. It is no longer possible to understand what a Chief Constable of the future needs to look like simply by looking in the rear view mirror at those who have been Chiefs in the past. What then should future police leaders look like?

Police leaders need to focus on achieving outcomes, not on preserving organisations. This requires some big thinking about how to serve and

support victims, how to manage offenders, how to reassure and protect the public.

The police leader of the future needs to think much bigger than the role of the police. They need to be able to influence far beyond the immediate span of their policing command and control.

I sometimes hear the phrase from very senior people in policing, about what is 'good for the service', or 'in the best interests of the service'. If we are focused on outcomes, we need to be less focused on structures and organisations.

The question should be 'what is good for the people in this area', and the answers to that question need to be heard from those local communities. Police leaders need to see local people as their point of reference, not just the organisations they lead.

I think some of the rules that currently bind organisations need to change. The managerial structures across blue light services, and across criminal justice agencies, should be more fluid and flexible, to allow for local innovation, for one leader to lead more than one organisation.

The comfort and security that is found in stability and familiarity is ultimately a false security. Leaders need to 'dare to be different'. To explore new things; to challenge traditional ways of doing things.

Grace Hooper, an American computer scientist and United States Navy rear admiral, is widely attributed with the quote: "The most dangerous phrase in any language is we've always done it this way."

It is questionable whether Captain Kirk, with his mission to “boldly go where no man has gone before”, would have fared well if he had attended the UK’s Police National Assessment Centre.

I think the current leaders of the police still tend to select people like themselves to be the future leaders of the police – that model starts to unravel at times of rapid and transformational change.

Police leaders of the future need to get ‘client-side’ of the business of policing. I said earlier that policing is a service business, and as such it has a lot still to learn from excellent service organisations.

One lesson is the amount of time the leaders of truly excellent service organisations spend seeing the business through the customer’s eyes.

Walking the customer journey, spending time seeing what customers see, spending time directly talking with customers. I’m not saying this doesn’t happen at senior levels in policing, but I sense in general it doesn’t happen anywhere near enough.

Police leaders need to be informed and embracing of the evidence of what works. I have heard the phrase once or twice that if medicine took the approach that criminal justice takes to evidence, then doctors would still be using leeches.

The right answers to achieving the best possible policing in the future will be found through vigorous and open debate. But people need to be prepared to listen as well as to get their own views across.

We need journalists to be better prepared to do real work to genuinely understand and get inside the stories that matter in policing, rather than just printing the latest opinion, or chasing easy headlines, if the public are to become truly involved and engaged in the wider debates surrounding policing. We also need a better, and more practically engaged and informed academia.

The manner in which the debates about policing have been conducted has not always reflected well on politicians, on the media, and on the police themselves. As a strong believer in the amazing things that the police do, I strongly encourage leaders in policing to fill their leadership space. To encourage the people they lead to engage with debates, but in a way that reflects well on the values, the principles, and the standards of their wonderful profession.

And to wholeheartedly embrace and engage the public in that dialogue. As I have said, the police are the public and the public are the police. The police is a public service. Policing is a service.

We can no longer afford to do things to people or for people, rather than with them. Public confidence will only grow when the public are directly engaged, listened to, and directly participate.

I believe that Police and Crime Commissioners in England and Wales, the boldest change in police governance internationally in a generation, are a huge monumental step in that direction.

