

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO**  
**THE POLICE ACT 1996 (LOCAL POLICING SUMMARIES) ORDER 2006**  
**2006 No. 122**

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Home Office and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

**2. Description**

2.1 The Serious and Organised Crime Act 2005 introduced a new requirement for police authorities to produce Local Policing Summaries. This order sets out the common information – or minimum standards – which those Summaries should contain.

**3. Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments**

3.1 None.

**4. Legislative Background**

4.1 Section 157 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 inserts a new section 8A in the Police Act 1996 introducing the concept of Local Policing Summaries.

4.2 New section 8A of the Police Act 1996 makes it a requirement for every police authority to produce each year a report summarising policing in their police area. This report is referred to as a “local policing summary”. The intention behind this legislation is to inform every community about how they are being policed. A report will be ‘sent’ to every ‘person’ who pays council tax in that local area. In practice, this means reports need to be sent to households as one council-tax bill is sent to each household.

4.3 The obligation is on police authorities, but we expect that this will, in reality, be a joint endeavour between police forces and their authorities.

4.4 The legislation specifies in new section 8A(3) that the Secretary of State may by order specify matters which are to be included in a local policing summary. This Order sets out 3 types of information which each summary is to contain. It is the first occasion on which the power in section 8A(3) has been exercised.

4.5 These types of information specified in the Order are

- A statement of the police authority’s priorities for the year
- An assessment of the extent to which the police force met the priorities set for the previous year
- An assessment of the extent to which the police force has met the strategic policing priorities (if any) set by the Secretary of State

4.6 In producing a summary, the police authority also needs to have regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State about the form and content of the summaries and the manner of their publication. The Home Office will also be producing guidance of this kind in due course.

4.7 This Order will come into force on 1 April 2006.

## **5. Extent**

5.1 This instrument applies to England and Wales.

## **6. European Convention on Human Rights**

6.1 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

## **7. Policy background**

7.1 At present, communications on how well policing is delivered at the local level vary across force areas. Whilst some forces communicate such information to the communities they serve, in other cases, communities have little local information about how well (or not) they are being policed, who is in charge, how the service can best be accessed, what priorities have been set and why. Beginning this dialogue is an important prerequisite for stimulating local communities to become more actively involved in policing concerns, which is a fundamental tenet of the Government's police reform programme.

7.2 New section 8A of the Police Act 1996 mandates every police authority to produce a summary of this sort of information. The legislation will ensure consistency of information provision across England and Wales with the introduction of certain minimum standards as set out in this Order.

7.3 The duty applies to the police authority at force level but our expectation is that the report may well be produced at a more local level than that. The guidance issued in respect of this legislation envisages a short, concise document (no more than three or four pages) with a specified format taking information from a number of sources. The summary would be sent out to each household in the area in question.

7.4 The Government's commitment to strengthening community engagement and accountability of policing to Local Communities was first set out in its November 2003 Green Paper, *Building Safer Communities Together*. It stated that:

*'Information is available - but we believe much more can and should be done to make it truly accessible for the public. But we also want to ensure that people can act on it to make a difference in their own communities.'*

7.5 The results of the Green Paper public consultation exercise showed that there was broad agreement on the need to make information more accessible to local communities. Regular newsletters through the door (58% supported this

communication channel) and talking to a beat officer (57%) were cited as the two most popular methods of receiving information about policing.

7.6 The Government's 2005, Police Reform White Paper *Building Communities: Beating Crime* stated that:

'The Government regards the dissemination to the public of better information about community safety as being a necessary first step towards increasing local engagement and accountability'.

7.7 As such the White Paper recommended the introduction of a statutory minimum requirement in terms of what each household can expect to receive in terms of local policing information.

7.8 Pilots of Local Policing Summaries were tested in January 2005 with 1600 reports sent out and 400 people interviewed. It found that:

- 85% were very interested or fairly interested in policing
- 59% said they would be more likely to take an interest in policing issues after receiving the newsletter (71% for 16-34 age group)
- 61% said they had greatly or slightly increased their knowledge on policing by reading the newsletter

7.9 Further research in October 2005, which tested out some sample summaries with a cross section of the public, also suggested firm evidence that the leaflets would help communicate and build relationships between police and their communities.

7.10 Consultation has taken place between the following bodies:

- Home Office
- Association of Chief Police Officers
- Association of Police Authorities
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
- Superintendents' Association

7.11 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA) understood the basis of this proposal but wanted to ensure that that the minimum standards were not too prescriptive, for example if they specified that performance on particular crime types had to be reported or that too many graphs or charts were required. The minimum standards have been framed in such a way to give local flexibility and discretion to areas on what they report but with some consistency of approach. Both ACPO and the APA were also concerned about the potential extra cost. To help keep costs to a minimum, the Home Office will be providing guidance which will offer sample templates for local areas to use if they wish to do so.

## **8. Impact**

8.1 No Regulatory Impact Assessment was required for the introduction of section 157 of the Serious and Organised Crime Act 2005.

8.2 A Regulatory Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument because no impact on the private or voluntary sector is foreseen.

8.3 The Instrument is not expected to have a significant impact on public sector resources.

## **9. Contact**

9.1 Dyah Wresniwiro at the Home Office, telephone 020 7035 3140 or e-mail: [Roro-Dyah.Wresniwiro@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Roro-Dyah.Wresniwiro@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk) can answer any queries regarding the instrument.