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Your Ref:

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Extension:

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National Assembly for Wales
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Dear

Apprenticeship Levy

I write in response to your letter to Chief Constables of 14th May 2018 regarding the Apprenticeship Levy. I am responding on behalf of colleagues as the Chair of the Welsh Police Chief Officer Group. The Police and Crime Commissioners of Wales are also concerned with this issue and I have copied this letter to their current Chair Jeff Cuthbert.

I can confirm that the four police forces in Wales contribute circa £2million per annum towards the UK government apprenticeship levy. As it currently stands, Police forces in England are able to access funding for police apprenticeships direct from the Home Office, however, this is not currently the case in Wales. English forces will be able to draw £24,000 for each trainee officer over the three years, which, based on the number of planned officer intakes in Wales of 1,077 over three years is equivalent to £25.8million or £8.6million per annum, if the same funding was applied in Wales.

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However, we have worked hard to deliver a single collaborating scheme in Wales to achieve the same goal, but expect to deliver a police constable degree at an average fee cost across Wales of £2.8million per annum and this demonstrates the prudence in our approach

It is important to stress that all parties, including Chief Constables, recognise this position as an unintended consequence of a policy that was not intended to engage the devolution settlement in this way. Policing is not devolved to Wales and training and education is not the remit of the UK government, leaving our organisations somewhat between these two equally clear and rationale positions. None of which, however, has yet served to move us closer to resolution.

The mechanism by which the Levy is distributed from the UK government to Wales is not entirely transparent to us, but clear statements have been made by Welsh Government that it will not fund apprenticeships on non-devolved areas of public service. This has meant that the police in Wales, can not under the present arrangements, access any of the apprenticeship funding placing policing in Wales at a disadvantage to colleagues in England.

As I will describe later, degree-level apprenticeship will soon be a legal requirement for police officers in England and Wales and therefore, Welsh forces will be required to meet the associated costs from budget which have been reduced by £2m as a result of the Levy and at the cost of some other part of our service to communities.

This clearly concerning structure was to be the subject of two meetings arranged for 24th April and 8th May 2018 which would have included Whitehall departments, Welsh

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Government, Policing and the College of Policing. These meetings were cancelled at the request of the Home Office whilst they were working with other UK Government departments to develop a strategy for Wales. We understand these discussions are ongoing and that the Secretary of State for Wales has been engaged.

There has been considerable effort from Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners across Wales over the last year to highlight this funding issue. This has included letters and meetings with both UK and Welsh Government Ministers and officials. We are grateful to both parties for the separate consideration of the position and our most recent discussions have given us some cause for hope.

It is our understanding that no meetings have taken place between the Home Office and Welsh Government to resolve this issue. All meetings that have taken place have been between the Welsh Police Forces and either Whitehall departments or Welsh Government.

There is an urgency to this question now upon us, the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship and Degree Holder Programmes become the only viable option for Police Probationer training after 31st December 2019 as the Initial Police Learning Development Programme ceases to be validated by the College from the this date. Forces are able to implement the new programme from the 1st April 2019, when the new curriculum became available and to ensure compliance, forces will have to award contracts in June 2018 and begin the recruitment process in July, with a requirement over the next three years to recruit and train 1,077 police officer posts.

If the Welsh Police Forces are unable to meet these dates due to the funding shortage, this will have an impact on the recruitment of officers and with there being no option to reduce the training, we have no choice but to run the risk of gaps in posts. The outcome of doing so will have an operational impact, with the inevitable public safety

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implications upon the communities of Wales that comes with reduced officer numbers. A different recruitment process, which will not financially penalise Welsh Forces, may have to be developed (and approved) which will result in different levels of training for officers between Wales and England which will cause issues for interoperability and hence the ability to police major events and move officers across the border more routinely.

Welsh Policing would like this funding issue to be resolved through dialogue between Welsh Government and the Home Office in order that the communities of Wales are not placed at a disadvantage. The new Home Secretary recently indicated, in response to a question at the Police Federation Conference, that the Apprenticeship Levy had been intended to be accessible by employers, once levied, for the training of their employees; This is the case for policing in England. We would hope for equity with the English forces, but as it stands, this is £2million tax per annum on policing and therefore our public services in Wales, that does not have the same effect in England.

I have alluded to an increasing sense of progress over recent weeks, with our understanding being that all parties recognise the imperative to find a resolution, whilst no detail has emerged. It may, therefore, be helpful if having laid out the position to date, I provide in further update at the end of June 2018.

Your interest in this significant issue is much appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

Matt Jukes
Chief Constable
Chair of Welsh Chief Officers Group