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violence
reduction
unit

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria

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Rt Hon Priti Patel
Secretary of State for the Home Office
House of Commons
London
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15 October 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing to inform you that as a result of the Government's refusal to fund a pay rise for police officers and staff, I have made the difficult decision to step away from my role leading police staff pay negotiations on behalf of the APCC and NPCC.

The Government has made clear it will not change from its position of a 0% pay offer to staff and officers, and with no other way of funding such a pay rise it is clear that any pay negotiations between staff and employers have been critically undermined by Government policy.

I believe staff, and officers have gone above and beyond throughout the pandemic and endured challenging and unprecedented times. I will not sit in front of trade unions representing police staff and defend an insulting government policy which refuses to reward this hard work.

It had been anticipated that the public sector pay pause, announced by the Chancellor in November 2020, would apply across the public sector, as with the public sector pay freeze during austerity. In fact the pay pause has been applied in a less than uniform fashion during the 2021/22 pay round. In addition to the 3% awarded to NHS staff, firefighters have received a 1.5% pay award, and local government workers consulted on a 1.75% pay offer. Currently, police staff and officers are the only emergency service that will feel the pause.

The inconsistent application of the pay pause makes it all the more difficult for our police workforce to endure. At the height of the pandemic our frontline police officers and police staff were going out on the streets and into our communities, keeping the public safe, while the majority of us were able to follow this Government's instruction to stay home and stay safe. The reward to police officers and police staff for going to work for the benefit of the nation, while putting both themselves and their families in danger, has been a real-terms pay cut at a time when there are well documented increases to inflation and an energy crisis affecting household fuel bills in particular. This comes after the government refused to accept the police as a priority when rolling out vaccines- something else deeply felt by the workforce.

Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables have written to you expressing their dissatisfaction at the pay pause; police officer staff associations are boycotting their own pay review in response to the pay pause; and police staff trade unions are likely to pursue industrial action in opposition to the pay pause. The police service is united in its opposition to the pay freeze in the context I describe.

The Police Federation and the Police Superintendents Association have announced they will no longer participate in the Police Remuneration Review Body. An independent pay review body process without the representation of rank and file police officers, nor the remit to recommend a pay rise clearly lacks any credibility and undermines the process. The lack of a credible process for the determination of pay runs the very real risk of undermining the morale and motivation of police officers. Whilst I appreciate that the pandemic has been costly for the nation, I think it is clear to see that the detrimental impact of this could prove more costly in the long run if we see industrial action amongst staff and if we see this policy felt in local forces efforts to recruit and uplift officer numbers.

This is a matter of grave concern. When officers tells us they have lost confidence in the process for determining their pay we have to listen.

Police staff are similarly disaffected and, given their pay is determined through collective bargaining, we face a lengthy and bitter dispute as their trade unions seek a positive pay offer on behalf of their members. Although it might be argued it is within the gift of PCCs and Chief Constables to make a pay award to police staff I would argue that two key barriers prevent us from doing so: the lack of funding for any pay award, and the incendiary effect a pay award for police staff will have on police officer employment relations.

We cannot be expected to bring division into our police forces with unequal pay policies.

I think it is vital that the Government reverses this 0% position, which is in effect a pay cut for staff who have kept our country safe during the pandemic.

Yours faithfully,

Kim McGuinness



Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner
APCC Workforce lead

CC. John Apter - National Chair of the Police Federation of England and Wales
Paul Griffiths - Chief Superintendent, President of the Police Superintendents' Association
Ben Priestley - National Officer, Police & Justice Service Group, UNISON
Pam Kelley - Gwent Police Chief Constable