

[Forcing reform](#) [1]

Written by [Charlotte Bowyer](#) [2] | Sunday 23 May 2010



Though far from perfect, the Coalition manifesto contains a pleasingly consistent commitment to transfer power away from central government and towards individuals, communities and local levels of government. Pre-election rhetoric has transformed into solid policy commitments, forming the basis for a refreshingly 'liberal' government after years of statist Labour control.

One area of reform looks set to be policing, as Theresa May's speech at the Police Federation annual conference confirmed. After insisting that 'I'm not interested in running the police', May vowed to cut down the health and safety laws and the level of paperwork that the police are currently constrained by, through measures such as abolishing the stop and search form. Another positive idea was to give the police the power to charge suspects for a wider range of minor crimes. At present, charging decisions are made by the Crown Prosecution Service, for whom the police must prepare detailed case files, even in the case of a guilty plea. Securing a go-ahead from the CPS can be a lengthy process, while their 'conviction rate' targets mean they can be more interested in scoring easy convictions than pursuing serious, but more hazy cases. Returning some charging powers to the police would give them greater responsibility, while cutting costs and hugely freeing up police time.

May also signaled that under the Coalition government, there would be transfer of power from Whitehall to local communities in regards to police accountability. This would be done by cutting Key Performance Indicators, political gimmicks and the creation of directly-elected local police commissioners, who would hopefully replace the useless and toothless Local Police Authority quangos. Such a figure would bring better accountability to local forces, forge closer links between citizens and police and remove the need for central government micromanagement. Some people have criticized this move, believing it to be a politicization of the police that will result in hardline populist policies forced upon them. However, it is ridiculous to argue that crime and the ways to address it are not political issues. As it stands, the police are already subject to incessant political meddling from the Home Office- which a local police commissioner would remove. The government must stand strong to enforce this transformative policy, which would give communities a unique and tailored policing plan and the police true accountability to the public whilst retaining their operational independence.

[blog comments powered by Disqus](#) [4]

Source URL: <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/politics-and-government/forcing-reform>

Links:

[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/politics-and-government/forcing-reform>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/taxonomy/term/5805>

[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[4] <http://disqus.com>