

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill

House of Lords Report
Wednesday 29 June 2011

This briefing sets out the Commission's view on key issues arising from the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill ahead of Report in the Lords.

GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE BILL

We note the Government's stated that it plans to re-introduce provisions for the election of Police and Crime Commissioners when the House of Commons consider any Lords' amendments to the Bill. The Government has said they intend for these elections to take place on May 2012 and we have previously set out to Parliament and Government what we believe needs to be in place for them to be successfully delivered.

While we are clear that whether or not there are elections and what date they take place on is a matter for Parliament, as is the amount of time taken to scrutinise the Bill, we remain concerned about the limited time available to finalise the legislation required in order for any elections to take place in May 2012.

We have, therefore, set out in this briefing the key legislative milestones which we think are necessary for successful elections to take place if Parliament decides to hold them on May 2012:

- **By the time Parliament rises for summer recess in mid-July:** the high-level regulatory and administrative principles for the elections should be clearly set out and agreed by Parliament. This will allow potential candidates, campaigners and Returning Officers to begin establishing their planning and budgeting assumptions for their roles in contesting and delivering the elections next May.
- **By the September session of Parliament, before Conference recess:** the detailed rules for the conduct of the polls and the regulation of campaign activity – including firm drafts of all relevant secondary legislation – should be publicly available and ideally should have begun the process of Parliamentary approval, so that the Commission can begin developing guidance to support candidates, campaigners and Returning Officers in delivering and complying with the framework. For instance, political parties have indicated that they would expect to be able to use their autumn conferences to explain the rules on campaigning to their

members and prospective candidates. If the Parliamentary timetable means that there is still uncertainty over the rules at this stage, we would need to qualify our guidance accordingly, and if necessary to draw attention to the implications for the proper running of elections in May 2012.

- **By early November:** the Government should aim to ensure that the final detailed rules for the conduct of the polls are in force by early November, in order for the Commission to be able to then finalise our detailed guidance for Returning Officers. The headline amounts and assumptions underpinning funding for the administration of the elections must also be agreed and publicly available by early November to allow Returning Officers to begin putting in place their plans and agreeing contracts with suppliers.

While the Commission recognises that it is for Parliament to determine how long it needs to properly scrutinise this legislation, our concern lies with the impact that finalising the rules at a late stage will have on both campaigners and those administering the proposed Police and Crime Commissioner elections.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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