

# Anti-Fracking Protest Camp Upton, Chester

A report by the Police & Crime Commissioner's Observers  
of Protests and Demonstrations (Pilot Project)

January 2016

## **FOREWORD**

This is the first piece of work by the Police & Crime Commissioners' Observers of Protests and Demonstrations.

The Observers comprise a diverse range of people from different walks of life, but one thing we all agree on is the right to peaceful protest and for people to make their voices heard.

We have acted as 'critical friends' observing the policing operation associated with the High Court Bailiff's eviction from the protest site at Upton, Chester.

We hope that our findings and issues for further consideration are useful to the Commissioner and will be of assistance in future planning.

***Observers of Protests and Demonstrations***

## THE ROLE OF OBSERVER

The following statement summarises the role of the Observers:

The Police and Crime Commissioner has introduced a pilot Observer's project to assist in maintaining trust and confidence in the police's approach to managing protests and demonstrations which take place in Cheshire. Observers have been invited to act as 'critical friends' and will attend major protests or demonstrations to observe police activity and interaction with demonstrators and the public. The Observers will provide feedback to the Commissioner to assist him in holding the Chief Constable to account for policing in Cheshire.

The Observer's Scheme has a number of overarching aims:

- To help the Commissioner maintain and improve public trust and confidence in the policing of demonstrations and protests in Cheshire.
- To assist in improving the police's approach to the management of protests and demonstrations by providing informed input to the Commissioner to assist him in holding the Chief Constable to account.
- To support the Commissioner and Chief Constable in ensuring professional policing standards when operations are undertaken.

Guidance on the Observer's Scheme including the terms of reference is attached at Appendix 1.

During the pilot phase, a small group of four individuals have been invited to become Observers by the Commissioner on the basis of their specific experience, or expertise, or knowledge of Cheshire. The Observers have strong links to the Cheshire area through residence, employment, volunteering or community work.

The Observers are:

- Peter Kent – former Leader of Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council.
- Bishop William Pwaisiho OBE - Rector of the Parishes of Gawsworth & North Rode and an Honorary Assistant Bishop of Chester Diocese.
- Susan Sellers – extensive Board level experience in the public and charity sector.
- Chris Upham MBE, BEM - Retired Police Officer and Former Justice of the Peace.

Whilst the Observers represent a diverse set of skills, backgrounds and experience, this does not mean that they formally represent or speak on behalf of the communities of Cheshire. The specific tasks undertaken by the Observers focusses around a critical assessment through observation of the policing operation, with the aim of identifying ways to improve policing services.

## **Establishing the Panel**

The Police & Crime Commissioner invited the Observers to take part in the pilot scheme during December 2015. The Observers attended a meeting at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on 21 December 2015, to find out more about the proposed role following which draft Terms of Reference and Guidelines were circulated for comment. The Observers were informed that the police operation surrounding the eviction of protestors at the Upton Community Protest Camp was potentially the first operation they would be asked to observe. A short briefing on the background to the Upton Camp was also provided.

A second meeting took place at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016 and a number of suggested amendments to the Terms of Reference for the pilot project were agreed.

In order to offer views and to understand the level of planning which the Constabulary and partner agencies had undertaken in relation the policing operation surrounding the eviction, three of the Observers attended a mutli-agency Gold Group on 8 January 2016.

## **SHALE GAS EXPLORATION**

Hydraulic fracturing – fracking – is a relatively new technology to extract gas from shale rock. It works by drilling into the ground and then directing a high-pressure mix of water, sand and chemicals at the rock to release the gas. It has been used extensively in the USA, where it has dramatically changed the country’s energy production landscape and significantly reduced energy prices. The UK Government considers fracking to be a key part of securing Britain’s energy future and is encouraging the exploitation of shale gas reserves.

There are environmental concerns over fracking which go beyond the general concern over developing a new process of exploiting fossil fuels. It uses large amounts of water and there are fears that the chemicals used can escape and contaminate ground water at a fracking site, as has happened in the USA. Fracking can also cause minor earth tremors, such as those experienced in Blackpool in 2011.

Proponents say that effective regulation will ensure that contamination will not happen. The Government points to a 2012 Royal Society study which concluded that the health and safety risks of fracking “can be managed effectively in the UK as long as operational best practices are implemented and enforced through regulation”. Those in favour of fracking recognise the risk of tremors, but say they are very minor and highly unlikely to cause any damage. The strength of the tremors has been compared to a HGV truck driving past a house.

## **BACKGROUND – UPTON PROTEST CAMP**

The Upton Protest Camp was first established in April 2014 by anti-fracking protestors to prevent testing on the site by the energy company, IGas. Testing at the site had been authorised by Cheshire West and Chester Council in July 2010 and an extension to the planning consent was approved in May 2013. The site is located in two fields to the North of Upton Grange Farm and is accessed from Duttons Lane on the right side travelling towards Acres Lane from the A41 Long Lane on the outskirts of Chester.

On 6 November 2015 a High Court Judge at Manchester County Court ruled that the protestors had no legal right to remain on the land and ordered that the protestors leave the site within 28 days (by 4 December 2015). The protestors failed to comply with this court order and in order to defy and delay eviction by bailiffs appointed by the High Court, they fortified the site with wooden walls, a moat, towers constructed from scaffolding, and underground tunnels. At the time of the eviction, it was estimated that 15 people were living at the site.

## **OBSERVATIONS DURING THE EVICTION**

The High Court Bailiffs commenced the eviction process on 12 January 2016. Observers attended on the 12 and 13 January as detailed below:

- 12 January 2016 – Bishop William Pwaisiho, Susan Sellers, Chris Upham
- 13 January 2016 – Peter Kent, Chris Upham.

Our observations over these two days are set out below:

### **12 JANUARY 2016**

We met at Constabulary HQ, Winsford at 9am and were accompanied by a Police Inspector throughout the course of our observations. Unfortunately, due to a logistical issue, we did not leave Police HQ until after 9.30 and thus missed the operational briefing by the Bronze Commander. We were therefore taken straight to the protest site at Duttons Lane where the road had been closed at both ends and Bailiffs had entered the campsite. Police Officers were deployed at both ends of the lane and also at various points around the protest site in the adjacent fields.

We had free access along Duttons Lane, but did not enter the protest site at any time. All observations were made from the Lane. The weather was very cold and increasingly showery as the day went on.

In addition to the main protest site there was an area set aside for protest by the police quite a long way away from the site entrance where a number of demonstrators had gathered. The protest was peaceful although there was quite a lot of shouting and some verbal abuse aimed at police officers. At no point did we see any police officer respond to this verbal abuse in a negative manner. Some of

the protestors also queried why we were allowed to be on the lane and they were not. The Officer accompanying us attempted to explain our role to these protestors.

As the morning wore on the police identified a potential problem area where protestors were gathering in the field on the other side of Duttons Lane, opposite the main entrance to the protest site. There was quite a lot of shouting between these protestors and those on site. Some police officers were deployed to watch these protestors.

We left the site at approximately 12 noon. A number of protestors with placards had gathered at the A41 end of Duttons Lane. We were taken to see an area nearby where mobile toilets and a small rest area with refreshments available had been set up. This was designed as a rest area for police who were able to take a break from the site. There were also showers available in case of need. At the time of our visit this was not completely operational as there had been trouble with the generator, however this problem was in the process of being rectified. The rest area (an events vehicle) did not appear to have any heating and was very cold.

We were then taken to a further location where a hot meal was available for some of the police officers who were able to leave the site. Others were to be given a 'butty bag' on site, however there appeared to be a problem with the 'butty bags' which had not arrived and this was being chased up.

We returned to the site at approximately 1.30pm. In the interim, the protestors from the field had been asked to leave by the Bailiffs as that area was also covered by the writ. Apparently this was achieved peacefully with the protestors being allowed to walk back along Duttons Lane towards the Acres Lane end.

During the course of the day, we saw the following:

- A number of protestors leaving the site some under arrest and some being escorted away;
- A protester being carried down the road by four police officers;
- At least two members of the public walking up and down Duttons Lane after its closure;
- One such member of the public challenging plain clothed police officers to reveal their identity, photographing them on his I Pad and threatening to report them if they did not show any identification;
- The area set aside for protestors at the Acres Lane end of Duttons Lane ;
- The bailiffs cutting a female protestor (subsequently arrested) free from a vehicle (as much as could be seen as a screen was erected whilst the bailiffs undertook this);
- A member of the local media attempting to take photos of that protestor being cut free from the vehicle from an unsafe position and being asked to desist by police officers on health and safety grounds;

- A Police Liaison Officer accompanying one protestor to his tent on the verge outside the main site to collect his belongings;
- The last protestor from a tunnel leaving the site; and
- The bailiffs safely removing the final protestor from a scaffolding structure.

Potential flash points which we did not see:

- The removal of a female protestor from the roof of a building by bailiffs – this was videoed and subject to an accusation of manhandling/trying to throw her off the roof of the building. Although we did not see the bailiffs getting the protestor off the roof, we did see this protestor walking down the road apparently uninjured and not in distress. The video footage has subsequently been published on social media and has been viewed by us independently. We are of the opinion that this does not show any evidence to justify the accusation;
- The walk of a number of protestors from the field opposite the main site down the road;
- A protestor locking themselves onto the flat bed vehicle at the A41 end of Dutton's Lane.

Over the course of the day, we spoke to:

- The Inspector (Bronze Commander) responsible for managing public order during the policing operation. This Officer briefed us and answered questions twice;
- The Inspector (Bronze Commander) and the team who were responsible for dealing with any criminal offences committed;
- Two police Observers from Lancashire Constabulary;
- Three of the four Police Liaison Officers;
- Other Police Officers involved in the operation;
- A representative from North West Ambulance Service;
- A Bailiff; and
- A member of the public who had chronicled the lives of the protestors over the last year or so and had been allowed access to the Lane.

At no time during the day did we try and engage any of the protestors in conversation, nor, given the heightened emotions/tensions on the day, would it have been appropriate or helpful to do so. We left the site shortly after 5pm when the eviction had been completed and all protestors had been removed from the site.

### **13 JANUARY 2016**

We met at Constabulary Headquarters, Winsford at 9.30am and were again accompanied by a Police Inspector throughout the course of our observations.

On arrival at the site at approximately 10.15am, there were just two protesters at the Acres Lane end of Duttons Lane, but by the afternoon a dozen or so had gathered. The mood was considerably calmer than the previous day and consequently we were able to have a conversation with them and get their perspective on the eviction process.

There was little criticism of police or bailiffs but the protestors did make the following points :-

1. That prior to the activity 'the Police' had told them that Duttons Lane would remain open and they would be able to protest outside the main entrance. They were disappointed that the Bronze Commander closed the road and failed to provide them with written proof that the road was lawfully closed and the reason for it. We explained to them that the initial closure was on safety grounds and under common law, but later in the morning the Council had issued a closure order.
2. They would have been happier with police officers going on site with the bailiffs to ensure they went about their work safely. It was explained why that was not the case although we did see Police Liaison Officers on site.
3. Some of the protestors wanted to go back on site to collect personal items but had been prevented from doing so. We explained that the previous day they had witnessed a Police Liaison Officer going with protestors to collect their possessions and suggested that they speak to a police officer to see if that could be facilitated.
4. In relation to the fenced off area of the Lane which had been set aside for them to protest from they said they would not use it because they did not feel it appropriate to fence protestors in and, in any event, they wanted to remain on the roadside at the end of the Lane where passing traffic would see them. We explained the fenced area was for their safety but the choice was up to them.
5. An Observer noted that he had heard that there were people on the (unlit) road at the Acres Lane end of Duttons Lane in the evening wearing dark clothing. After some discussion the protestors suggested that "Slow Down" signs could be placed in both directions. We passed this on to the Commissioner's Office and it was subsequently reported that a roads policing officer had already been asked to put signs in place and that Silver Command would ensure this had happened.
6. Concern was expressed about property that had been left in the "camp". The protestors' legal observer was making a list of items that had been left behind and it was understood that it was to be presented when complete. In addition, they mentioned food that had been given to them by local people. We suggested that if there was anything non-perishable such as tins, it could be given to a food bank and they thought that a good idea.

During the course of the second day, we had the opportunity to speak to:

- Protestors at Acres Lane;
- The Inspector (Bronze Commander) responsible for managing public order during the policing operation;
- The Inspector (Bronze Commander) and the team who were responsible for dealing with any criminal offences committed;
- Other Police Officers involved in the operation; and
- Bailiffs, including the owner of the company.

## **OPERATIONAL DISCUSSION POINTS**

### 1) Public/Protestors awareness of the eviction taking place

We learnt from a member of the public that the protestors were aware the eviction would take place during the week commencing 11 January 2016 (although not which day). This was because a Fire Service vehicle had gone slowly up and down the lane a couple of times on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January. They believed it was on a reconnaissance run.

### 2) Closure of Duttons Lane

There was some confusion over the closure of Duttons Lane and Police Officers were being challenged as to why Duttons Lane was closed and under what legal power. To provide greater clarity, it might be helpful in future for all Officers to be clear about what 'law' a road has been closed under to enable them to provide a simple explanation to the public. Given the narrowness of the Lane and the number of vehicles involved in the operation, we consider that closing the lane was the correct decision, but this should have been the plan from the outset.

A few members of the public gained access to Duttons Lane at the start of the policing operation, this caused confusion and made it harder to deny access as these individuals got further up the Lane.

### 3) Use of Police Liaison Officers

All three of the Police Liaison Officers spoken to told us that they wished they had started their liaison role with the protestors earlier. Whilst initially they had been viewed with suspicion as 'spies' some of the protestors had started to speak to them although they had not been on the site until that day. They felt their role was useful and they had, for example, been able to facilitate the provision of 'Slow Down' traffic signs to allay the fears of one protestor whose tent was on the verge outside the camp. Had they been deployed earlier, perhaps when the court order had been made, then they might have made more progress in building trust and mutual respect between the police and the protestors.

#### 4) Safety of protestors at the road side

The issue of the safety of protestors on the road had apparently been picked up by the Bronze Commander late in the afternoon of 12 January. Police vehicles were placed some distance either side of the protestors to warn oncoming vehicles of their presence, however warning signs would fulfil that function less expensively, especially in evening hours when it is dark. It may also have been helpful if the fenced off area for protestors had been situated at the opposite side of Acres Lane.

#### 5) Community Liaison

We were initially unclear what steps had been taken to keep the local community informed and were told by one protestors that there was little or no liaison with the local school. However, after the event, we were provided with a briefing on widespread community liaison undertaken by the Constabulary, including with the local school. In future, it would be helpful for us to have this information beforehand.

We would also have liked to see a copy of the leaflet that was handed out within the community. We consider that it would be very helpful for members of the public to be clearly informed of the role and responsibility of the police in an eviction situation such as this one.

#### 6) Provision of refreshments for Police Officers

There appears to have been a logistical problem in supplying Police Officers who could not leave the site with food and a hot drink. Many officers had been on duty from the early morning but had no meal breaks until mid-afternoon on a miserable, cold, wet day. We believe that this was not good for the morale of police officers involved in the operation.

#### 7) Identification of Police Officers

In order to prevent plain clothes police officers being challenged, it may be helpful to ensure all officers have some form of visible identification at future protests/demonstrations.

In addition, we have set out a number of points for discussion to assist in developing the Observer's Scheme at Appendix 2.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

We felt that generally the policing operation had been well planned and well executed. The police remained impartial, enabling those who wished to peacefully protest to do so whilst ensuring that those who needed to carry out their lawful business were also able to do so. All the protestors were evicted from the site by the end of the first day, ten arrests were made and there were no injuries reported.

The many police officers spoken to over the two days all felt the arrangements had worked well and that at no time had anyone been put in danger. We also spoke with several bailiffs, including the owner of the firm, and they all felt the eviction had gone to plan.

We thought that the Police Liaison Officers performed a valuable role and should be deployed earlier if possible.

The Police Officers involved deserve praise for the way they conducted themselves throughout the operation. Whilst there has been some public criticism in the local media of the number of officers deployed, from our own observations the level of resources deployed was intrinsic to maintaining public order and ensuring the safety of all involved and enabling the eviction to be completed in one day.

We would also particularly like to thank the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Inspector who accompanied us during the operation for their support and note the open way in which everyone responded to their presence.





**Pilot Scheme -  
Observers of the  
Policing of Protests and  
Demonstrations  
GUIDANCE**

## **1. Introduction**

This document provides information and guidance on the aims, rationale, role and running of the Commissioner's pilot scheme of Observers on the policing of protests and demonstrations.

Specific articles within the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) combine to provide a "right of protest" and, where the intent of protesters is peaceful, the police service has a duty to protect this right. In practice however, the police have to work to achieve a balance between facilitating peaceful protest and protecting the public and property and permitting people to go about their lawful business—something which can be far from straightforward in many instances. In the United Kingdom, the police carry out their duties with the consent of the public and it is vital that the public retain confidence in the police.

The growth of social media has meant that, more than ever before, the strategies and tactics employed in policing protests are the subject of public and media scrutiny. The need to ensure that the way protests and demonstrations are policed is fair and the rationale for using particular approaches and methods is clearly of vital importance.

Establishing a group of Observers to consider this important area of police activity represents a key means of reassurance for the Commissioner and the Chief Constable. Observers can see things from a different perspective and can provide valuable insight into how police responses may be interpreted by communities.

## **2. What are the aims and objectives of the Observer's Scheme?**

The Observer's Scheme has a number of overarching aims, primarily:

- To help the Commissioner maintain and improve public trust and confidence in the policing of demonstrations and protests in Cheshire.
- To assist in improving the police's approach to the management of protests and demonstrations by providing informed input to the Commissioner to assist him in holding the Chief Constable to account.
- To support the Commissioner and Chief Constable in ensuring professional policing standards when operations are undertaken.

The Terms of Reference are attached at Annex A.

Observers will act as 'critical friends' to the Commissioner and Constabulary. They are volunteers and their role is to provide independent assurance with a focus on driving service improvement and contributing to maintaining positive relationships between the police service and local communities.

Observers will provide the Commissioner and Cheshire Constabulary with their views and feedback. Their views are independent of the police service and the Observers carry no responsibility or liability for the outcome of decisions based upon it. The Observers are not answerable to the Police & Crime Commissioner or the Chief Constable. Similarly, Cheshire Constabulary and the Commissioner's office are not responsible for Observer's actions, nor are they obliged to act upon the feedback they provide.

The role is not, nor should it be encouraged to become, one of scrutineer, pressure group or a body which deals with complaints. There are separate procedures in place to deal with complaints.

### **3. Why have Observers?**

Having Observers in place provides a number of strengths. These are:

- The ability to provide critical appraisal of police actions from the perspective of an independent person.
- The ability and willingness to engage in constructive dialogue with the police service.
- The ability to identify and suggest different options for the potential resolution of policing problems.

These strengths can be used to help resolve policing problems linked to the policing of protests at both strategic and tactical levels. Effective policing approaches can result from this approach, leading to safer, more confident communities.

### **4. Role of Observers**

During the pilot phase, a small group of Individuals will be invited to become Observers by the Commissioner on the basis of their specific experience, or expertise, or knowledge of Cheshire. Observers must have strong links to the Cheshire area through residence, employment, volunteering or community work.

Whilst Observers will represent a diverse set of skills, backgrounds and experience, this does not mean that they formally represent or speak on behalf of the communities of Cheshire.

The specific tasks undertaken will focus around a critical assessment through observation of an operation, with the aim of identifying ways to improve policing services.

Whilst steps will be taken to ensure that Observers are provided with as much notice as practicable of a police operation, it must be recognised that the dynamic nature of protests and the consequent policing activity will mean that sometimes, Observers may be unable to attend at every opportunity. Involvement in activities linked to specific events and operations will thus be necessarily flexible.

## **5. Specific issues relating to protests and demonstrations**

Most protests and demonstrations will be termed critical incidents. The nationally accepted definition of a critical incident is as follows:

‘any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of victims, their families and/or the community.’

The police response to certain critical incidents, such as particular protests, may need to be in place for some time and in such circumstances the views of an Observer may need to be sought by the Constabulary. On such occasions, the Commissioner’s Office may be contacted to arrange for the involvement of an Observer to attend the Gold Group (strategic decision-making group) in relation to the protest or demonstration. Upon receiving such a request, the Commissioner’s Office will nominate an Observer to take part in the Gold Group.

The role of the Observer at the Gold Group will be to provide a perspective in light of their particular experience and expertise if they feel comfortable doing so, but their role and presence is to be an observer and not to justify operational policing decisions.

In some instances, it may be considered necessary to invite Observers to a Forward Command Position. Being close to the scene will assist the Observers in offering views and providing feedback to the Commissioner.

Observers must be consulted about any decision to request their presence at any forward control point and it is advisable to do this at an early stage. It is important that detachment from the incident itself is maintained. The safety of Observers must be considered at all times and properly risk assessed. Observers must not be placed, nor encouraged to place themselves, in any position where their personal safety may be compromised. The Observers will be accompanied by a Police Officer at all times when observing a protest or demonstration. This officer will be responsible for conducting a dynamic risk assessment whilst the observations take place and should the threat level become unacceptable, observations should be cancelled with immediate effect. Whilst attending an operation, Observers must ensure they comply with any orders or directions from police officers in order to help ensure their personal safety is protected.

Before undertaking their role, Observers will be required to undertake to indemnify the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable in relation to any injury to or death of any person and for loss of or damage to any property, except to the extent that it may arise out of the act, default or negligence of Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable or his officers, agents and servants.

## **6. Training**

Observers may not have a police background and thus the provision of relevant background and induction training will be considered. It is important that appropriate inputs on Data Protection, Information Security and confidentiality are provided.

## **7. Press and other media**

Any publicity around the group of Observers will clearly state their role, the pilot status of the Scheme, highlight their independence of the police, and focus on the provision of views and feedback to assist the Commissioner in holding the Chief Constable to account for delivering an efficient and effective police service.

The Observers will not act as media spokespersons for the Commissioner or Constabulary and will provide feedback to the Commissioner as outlined in Section 10 of this guidance.

Before disclosing the involvement/personal details of Observers in any capacity, their permission must be sought.

It is important to ensure that the independence of the Observers is retained by considering the way their involvement and role is portrayed in the media. Public perceptions of their independence may change if their role/involvement is not described appropriately.

## **8. Reporting on the activity of Observers**

The Observers will be asked to provide a written public report to the Commissioner and Constabulary following each policing operation that is observed.

It is also recommended that a short report on the activities of the Observers is prepared on an annual basis and considered at a meeting of the Commissioner's Scrutiny Board. This will include:

- The nature of protests and demonstrations the Observers have been asked to attend.
- The activities the Observers have undertaken.
- The impact of feedback provided by the Observers (e.g. changes to policy, decisions regarding tactics to employ).

## **9. Expenses**

The role of Observer is voluntary and they will not be paid for their involvement or feedback, however, a system will be put in place to ensure that any reasonable expenses incurred through their activities (e.g. travel, subsistence etc) are paid as quickly and efficiently as possible. Appropriate audit procedures will apply to expenses paid to ensure that the costs of running the Observer Scheme are accountable and open to monitoring.

Travelling expenses are payable to Observers at the Inland Revenue rates and therefore payment is exempt from income tax.

## **10. Conflicts of interest**

It is important that any conflicts of interest that may affect the independence of Observers are considered. Such conflicts are for individual Observers and the Commissioner's office to consider and determine whether any such conflicts preclude their suitability for involvement as an Observer or in relation to a particular protest or demonstration.

## **11. Confidentiality**

During the course of observing the police response to a protest or demonstration, an Observer may acquire personal information about persons connected with police enquiries, the majority of whom will not at that time have appeared in Court. Some will never appear in Court. That information must be protected against improper or unnecessary disclosure. Observers should be aware that improper disclosure of information acquired whilst undertaking their role as Observers may attract civil or criminal proceedings. Additionally, unauthorised disclosure of facts concerning police operations or the security of police stations may constitute an offence under the Official Secrets Act 1989.

## **12. Evaluation of the Pilot Scheme**

The pilot scheme will be run between January to June 2016.

At the end of this period, the Commissioner's Office will conduct an evaluation of the pilot scheme, taking into account the views of the Observers and the Constabulary on the operation of the scheme. The results of the evaluation will be reported to the Commissioner alongside a recommendation as to whether the Scheme should continue, and if so, make recommendations on the future structure, membership and operation of the Scheme.



## **Observers of Protests and Demonstrations – Pilot Project**

### **Aims**

- To help the Commissioner maintain and improve public trust and confidence in the policing of demonstrations and protests in Cheshire.
- To assist in improving the police's approach to the management of protests and demonstrations by providing informed input to the Commissioner to assist him in holding the Chief Constable to account.
- To support the Commissioner and Chief Constable in ensuring professional policing standards when operations are undertaken.

### **Terms of Reference**

- To offer views to the Commissioner and Chief Constable on issues raised by communities and organisations over the policing of protests and demonstrations.
- To offer views, as requested, during the planning process of specific major protests or demonstrations in Cheshire.
- To attend major protests or demonstrations, observing police activity and interaction with demonstrators.
- To contribute to the debrief process following a major protest or demonstration.
- To feedback to the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable on the Constabulary's approach to the policing of protests and demonstrations in Cheshire.

### **PILOT PROJECT: DISCUSSION POINTS**

To assist in the future development of the Observer's Scheme and to aid its evaluation, we offer the following points for the Commissioner's consideration after undertaking this initial piece of work:

#### **1) Identification**

We believe that it would be useful to have some easily discernible identification to show who we are. This may help to avoid our presence adding to the tension from the protestors' point of view and would help when we explain to others who we are. We have come up with different ideas for consideration including: a high-vis jacket or tabard, an armband, or a lanyard.

#### **2) Number of Volunteer Observers**

We believe that with the necessary short notice that is given to us of an operation commencing, it is conceivable that at some time in the future none of us would be available. Therefore, we would recommend that should the Scheme progress beyond the pilot stage, the number of volunteers be increased to 6-8 people.

#### **3) Skills and Experience of Observers**

The current group of Observers is well balanced and with a useful range of backgrounds, however perhaps consideration could be given to recruiting an individual with PR/Media experience and a representative of young people.

#### **4) Training for Observers**

It would be useful for us to see the public order training given to police so they know what standards the police are expected to adhere to.

#### **5) Level of engagement/consultation with Protestors**

It would be helpful for the Commissioner to clarify the extent to which we are expected to fulfil an engagement role with protestors, bearing in mind the need to ensure we are not confused with spokesmen for the Commissioner or the Police. When we speak to members of the public it would be helpful to have a police officer close by who can supply explanations regarding operational policing matters so that Observers are not mistaken for spokesmen for the Constabulary.

#### **6) Visit to Operational Command Room**

None of the Observers visited the operational command room during this operation, but we believe it may have been useful for one of us to be there for at least part of the operation and should be considered in the future.

## **7) On-site Custody Suites**

We did not visit the on-site custody suite to see the processing of an arrested protestor. We would appreciate guidance as to whether this should be included within their remit or whether such a visit would be better undertaken by Independent Custody Visitors.