Joint letter from

Police and Crime Commissioners
Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners
Deputy Mayors

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Sent via email only
Please send responses to contactyourpcc@kent.police.uk

16 November 2026

Dear Prime Minister

We are writing to ask you to urgently intervene to stop the forced mergers of Police forces.
The consequences for our local neighbourhoods, victims and witnesses will be substantial, and we are concerned about the disruption that force mergers will cause for local policing, investigations, and democratic accountability.

We recognise the potential case for voluntary mergers in some areas where there is public and democratic support, and where there is a strong evidence base for doing so. Such instances could be supported by the Home Office as pathfinder forces allowing them to build on existing collaboration. However, mergers should not be imposed top down.

Colleagues from across the political spectrum are speaking out against the idea of creating so-called "mega forces".

The Liverpool City Region Mayor has said:

"The idea that we'd somehow get better policing by swallowing local forces up into a handful of enormous regional super-forces runs counter to the devolution agenda. It would be a strange step backwards to strengthen local democratic accountability with one hand, only to undermine that principle with the other."[1]

It has been alleged that the independent review of police force structures will recommend that between nine and eighteen larger forces should be created from the existing 43[2]. This will conflict with your devolution agenda, with force boundaries and Mayoral boundaries being inconsistent. All of the benefits of devolution for public safety, policing and the wider criminal justice system would be lost, the accountability of forces to the communities that they serve would be diluted, and the democratic link between the police and the public – that is so vital to trust and confidence – would be severely weakened. A case study for one region is attached which demonstrates the potential issues.

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[1] https://www.ft.com/content/58dc7cb0-bbce-4197-83eb-1fed7e2e9523?syn-25a6b1a6=1

[2] https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/nov/05/cut-number-of-police-forces-england-hogan-howe-review

The creation of nine regional forces would mean a council tax increase for millions of people as precepts will have to be aligned. During a cost-of-living crisis, should residents be expected to pay more to merge police forces, for what for many will mean less of a service?

Business leaders are speaking out about the consequences of proceeding with mergers, specifically regarding the City of London Police merging with the Metropolitan Police. A joint letter from representative bodies describes this idea as "costly and counterproductive" that will "unnecessarily alter a structure that already delivers responsive and high-quality policing in the Square Mile"[3].

The efforts of the Metropolitan Police and NPCC to publicly intervene in a political debate to call for "between 8-10" forces have only caused division and uncertainty. Some Chief Constables are now speaking out publicly about the proposal made at the event in Manchester on Friday.

The Chief Constable of Cheshire Police said at the event:

"The bit that gives me concern is the notion that you have to be big to be good. There are smaller, very effective forces."[4].

There is no evidence, academic or otherwise, that shows that larger forces perform better. Analysis of HMICFRS inspection findings show that Cheshire, Cumbria, Kent, North Yorkshire and Lancashire are amongst the best performing forces in the country[5]. Gwent and Sussex are in the top five for the number of 999 calls answered in under ten seconds last month[6].

In 2025/6, the Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that the top three areas where the public said the Police were doing a good or excellent job were Hertfordshire, Cheshire and Norfolk[7]. And for crime rate per 1000 population, it is smaller forces that make up the top five - North Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Suffolk, West Mercia and Dorset[8].

The often-repeated argument that policing is performing certain functions 43 times is incorrect. We have mature and established regional and national collaborations, which are delivering better investigations and outcomes for our neighbourhoods. BlueLight Commercial and Police Digital Service, both companies owned by PCCs and Deputy Mayors, have delivered millions of pounds of savings and efficiencies since their establishment, and these efficiencies are being further developed through the Police Efficiency Commercial Programme. Neighbouring forces meanwhile are collaborating across the country on both frontline and support functions, to provide an improved service as well as better value for money for the public.

Therefore, investment in leadership and culture could yield better returns. In the 2023-5 PEEL inspections by HMICFRS, only six Forces were rated good or outstanding by HMICFRS for leadership[9].

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[3] https://www.thetimes.com/article/15c05841-9f5b-4bec-afd8-581f82698715?shareToken=e355a3b72addb33b8fa46a51cab8ab80

[4] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/11/06/uk-most-successful-police-force-attacks-mahmood-reforms/

[5] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/11/06/uk-most-successful-police-force-attacks-mahmood-reforms/

[6] 999 performance data | Police.uk

[7] Perception and experience of police and criminal justice system, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

[8] Data related to Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics

[9] State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2024–25 - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

The public do not support “mega forces”. Two opinion polls have shown significant national opposition. In the first, 70% opposed the creation of larger forces[10], and in the second, 58% were opposed[11].

Surveys conducted by PCCs show seven out of ten respondents opposed “mega forces” too. These were conducted because the independent review of police force structures did no public engagement or consultation[12].

The evidence does not support a nine-force model for policing. The public does not support it. Mayors and PCCs do not support it. Many Chief Constables do not support it. It is not compatible with your devolution agenda.

And victims, witnesses and neighbourhoods would lose out.

Reform should focus on national capability reform and leadership, whilst taking into account your devolution agenda.

We urge you to intervene to stop the top-down re-organisation of police forces.

Yours faithfully

Matthew Scott
Kent Police and Crime Commissioner

Lisa Townsend
Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner

Clive Grunshaw
Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner

Alison Hernandez
Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Police and Crime Commissioner

Rupert Matthews
Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner

Jonathan Ash Edwards
Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Clare Moody
Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner

Katy Bourne OBE
Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner

Donna Jones
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Police and Crime Commissioner

Marc Jones
Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Simon Foster
West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

[10] https://www.dailymail.com/news/article-15545649/Fewer-three-10-voters-support-Labours-plan-merge-police-forces-majority-sceptical-proposal-handle-non-emergency-calls-AI-chat-bots.html

[11] https://yonderconsulting.com/poll-archive/police-mergers.pdf

[12] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2026/11/04/police-chiefs-at-war-over-mahmoods-plans-to-merge-forces/

John Campion
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

David Sidwick
Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner

Chris Nelson
Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner

Darryl Preston
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Jonathan Evison
Humberside Police and Crime Commissioner

Matthew Barber
Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner

Philip Wilkinson OBE
Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Philip Seccombe
Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Roger Hirst MBE
Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Tim Passmore
Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner

Nicolle Ndiweni-Roberts
Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Joy Allen
Durham Police and Crime Commissioner

David Allen
Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Alison Lowe OBE
Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime
West Yorkshire

Matt Storey
Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner

Gary Godden
Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Susan Dungworth
Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner

Colin Sutton
Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner

Jo Coles
Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime
York and North Yorkshire

Ben Adams
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Case Studies – South West Region

The proposed Mayoral Strategic Authority in Wessex would overlap with Dorset Police and parts of both Wiltshire Police and Avon and Somerset Police. A Thames Valley and Swindon Mayoral Strategic Authority would overlap with both Thames Valley Police and part of Wiltshire Police. A Mayor of Wessex would need to therefore be represented on three separate Police and Crime Boards under the Police Reform programme's proposals.

For Devon and Cornwall Police, you would have the Mayor of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, a Cornwall Foundation Strategic Authority and four unitary authorities in Devon from which to determine governance and accountability.

In a nine-force model, the five South West Region forces would be covered by the West of England Mayor, Wessex Mayor, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay Mayor, Gloucestershire Foundation Strategic Authority, Thames Valley and Swindon Mayor and the Cornwall Foundation Strategic Authority.