

Law and order faces privatisation threat

THE nature of law and order could change forever following radical proposals to privatise 26 police duties.

The Home Office's Core Tasks Review proposes handing over some minor duties to the private sector or local authorities. This includes football matches being policed by private security stewards.

Gaming, betting and alcohol licence applications would also be handed over to the private sector.

It is the first review of police tasks since the Royal Commission in the 1960s. It is hoped officers will be able to devote more time to detecting crime.

The Home Office is now assessing the cost effectiveness of implementing the changes.

Officers and organisations are already co-operating over the use of private security firms at events such as football matches.

Police duties doled out under shake-up

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Wycombe Wanderers Football Club have their own security officer and employ stewards to work alongside police.

Director Gordon Richards, who is also the club's company secretary, said: "We are going in the direction of using solely private security firms during matches anyway. We are talking to the police at the moment on this very subject.

"Our main problem is that it costs us an awful lot to have the police at football matches. We do want to have a continuing relationship with the police, but we do not see any problem with

using private security firms."

Crime prevention groups have expressed concern over the type of people employed by private security firms.

Gordon Summerfield, chairman of the local Crime Prevention Panel, fears convicted criminals may be employed by such companies.

He said: "I am very very concerned about the intention to put police jobs out to private companies. Until we get a better system of checking the identification of people in private security companies, I cannot support the idea."

Dicky Bird, chairman of the Wycombe District Neighbourhood Watch Association, said he supported any proposals which gave the



Talks: Gordon Richards

police more time to detect crime.

"Too much police time has been taken up doing subsidiary matters.

"Too many problems have been pushed on to the police. Crime detection should be given more support."

Superintendent Kath Govier, of High Wycombe police, refused to comment.

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Blair, of Thames Valley Police, allayed officers fears that the private sector would

take over a large number of their duties.

He said: "We welcome the fact that the publication of these proposals ends the intense speculation about a number of aspects of policing.

"It clearly maintains the current style and character of policing. These are, of course though, only proposals, and there is still a lot of work to be done to instigate them."

But the Police Federation has attacked the proposals, asking for assurances that a police presence is maintained at all public events.

A spokesman said: "Under no circumstances do we accept that responsibility for maintaining law and order in public places should be undertaken by any bodies other than the police."

The federation also fears the proposals could later lead to duties such as traffic control and powers of arrest and detention being handed over to the private sector.