

The Home Office minister, Vernon Coaker, gave the following response:

The use of legislation in an operational context is entirely a matter for the strategic direction that a chief officer provides for his or her force. Whether it be in an urban or rural area, this is an extremely important issue, which this debate helps to reinforce. Tactics on how individual raves should be policed are at the discretion of the officers deployed at the scene of an event and involve difficult judgments on minimising disturbance to local communities and residents, preventing any escalation in public disorder and ensuring the safety of police officers and rave-goers.

Although the detail of operational decisions is not necessarily a matter for ministerial interference, Ministers are keen—and I am certainly keen—to see best practice in policing raves disseminated across the police service, including in Norfolk. In that regard, a workshop on policing raves was hosted in June by the recently established National Policing Improvement Agency, which was attended by 100-plus police officers from around the country, including officers from Norfolk. I understand that police tactics, the sharing of intelligence, partnership working, national guidance and current legislation—issues also raised by the hon. Gentleman this evening—were all discussed, and that the feedback from the workshop will be collated and used both to promote short-term steps that forces can take further to improve their response to raves, and to inform longer-term strategic work, including whether any changes to legislation are required.

That should be of help to the hon. Gentleman, because, clearly, such a workshop will consider issues such as the policing of raves in remote rural areas, and the sharing of good practice between police forces, especially when one force has found a particular way of operating to be effective. I take his point that there is a big difference between policing a rave in a remote part of Norfolk and policing a rave in a field on the edge of London, for example.

The sub-group on raves, which was set up by the Association of Chief Police Officers working group on public order, provides an appropriate forum to take work forward, and further underlines police commitment to work nationally to improve policing of illegal raves. ACPO has recognised that the problem is growing, and the sub-group is building on work done in an earlier forum. I shall ask my officials to read the record of the debate, and to send the relevant points made by the hon. Gentleman to that working group for consideration. That might benefit him and perhaps other Members across the country who have had such problems. He asked, if I remember rightly, whether it would be possible for attendance at a rave, or organising a rave, to be made a criminal offence. The group will be able to consider whether that is appropriate, whether other legislation covers that, or whether something could be done.¹⁷

¹⁷ [Ibid, c541-2](#). At the time of the debate Mr Coaker was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Office.