



Agenda Item No 18

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

INSPECTIONS WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the Meeting of the Inspections Working Group held on Monday 1 February 2010 in Gold Command, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith, commencing at 1.10 pm.

PRESENT

Mr R Cole (Chair)

Ms E Barraclough

Mr A Barry

Mr P Everingham

Mrs J Maes

Mrs L Shaw

Also present:

Chief Executive (Mr C Alcock)

Deputy Chief Executive (Mr S Edwards)

Policy and Performance Officer (Ms N Brooker)

Committee Services Officer (Mrs J Head)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Egan.

2. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal interest in relation to any item on the Agenda.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference for the working group as agreed by the Police Authority at its meeting in November were noted by the members.

RESOLVED, that the terms of reference for the working group were noted.

4. POLICE AUTHORITY INSPECTIONS: ADVICE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This was the first meeting of the group and the Chief Executive reminded members of the background to inspections and of how documents previously provided to all Members contained key information central to the inspectors' likely approach. The Framework published by HMIC in July 2009 and their set of Performance Characteristics published in September 2009 were at the heart of it. Derived from these, he reminded members of the 4 themes under which the Authority would be inspected, these being:

- Setting strategic direction and priorities.
- Scrutinising performance outcomes.
- Achieving results through community engagement and partnerships.

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- Ensuring value for money and productivity.

In particular, Figure 2 on pages 11-12 of the July 2009 HMIC Framework document contained between 4 and 6 key questions and assessment criteria against which the Authority would be marked on a scale of 1-4. The September 2009 document had enlarged on these important criteria in more detail to give about 70 examples of the sorts of questions which could be asked. Members should make themselves as familiar as possible with these questions and criteria, and he suggested that Figure 2 be reduced to an *aide memoire* which members and officers could keep with them as a reminder of the core essentials.

The Chief Executive also updated members generally on his recent attendance at an inspection event; plus a meeting he had held with Mr Bruce Jassi, Lancashire Police Authority's lead member for inspections - of whose helpful advice to Members some notes were provided to the Working Group. Certain general and specific points of practicality were apparent:

Establishing a sense of 'ownership' by Authority Members of the inspection process and its eventual report was essential. It would be the responsibility of not only the Authority as whole but also its individual members and representatives when interviewed to ensure that they were each able to present to the inspection team and to best advantage examples taken from their own knowledge of its business of how effective the Authority was in performing against these 4 themes.

He emphasised very strongly that the Authority's fundamental aim in the inspection should be to demonstrate to the inspectorate how it made a difference – on behalf of the public – to policing in Cumbria.

This would be found in answers to questions like how it asserted influence over the Constabulary in such areas as e.g. their compilation of the Policing Plan and how they then monitor robustly the Constabulary's performance against targets set there.

The Chief Executive guided Members through the practicalities of their inspection and advised that, as part of its own in-house preparations, a draft timeline of events had been created for the Authority. The actual date of the on-site inspection stage was yet to be announced, but we know this stage comprises the 10th week of a 21-week inspection cycle. The Authority is told this will occur sometime in June 2010, so a variable timeline for backward-planning has been created in his office based on each of the 4 weeks in June being the on-site week.

Hence, the important scene-setting meeting with the Inspectors could be expected to take place some time in May. This would be the Authority's opportunity to showcase and to promote itself and he suggested that a prestigious location like the meeting room on the roof of the BCU HQ Durrhill would be ideal for this purpose.

Whilst the inspection team was carrying out its 5-day on-site visit in June, the Authority could expect to receive 'feedback' in the form of a 'hot debrief' (*sic*) at the end of each day, which would give valuable opportunities for the Authority to provide further evidence or else to correct any wrong impressions gained by the inspection team during that day.

The Chief Executive advised members of those various areas of activity which the inspections teams would be looking at; including questions about (e.g.) to what extent and how successfully the Authority reflected or engaged with communities in Cumbria or could evidence how it surveyed its community and contacted hard-to-reach minority groups.

Members discussed the changes which were currently taking place to the structure of the Constabulary and the possibility of introducing 'Embedded Governance' within the Authority to complement those changes. It had already been agreed that Members would sit on the new Constabulary Boards and be present at decision-making meetings. The Authority would need to look at its own structures to reflect such changes and help to reduce bureaucracy. Although members felt that 'Embedded Governance' had potential for the Authority, it was stated that now was not the right time to change its structures with the inspections programme being so close. In any event the inspection team might suggest a different approach and so Members indicated their reluctance to change to a new structure which may then have to be changed again as a result of inspection findings.

Members discussed what examples could be used in the case studies to be presented to the inspectors. These case studies would be used to illustrate how well the Authority performed against the 4 main themes of the inspection and how it made a difference. One such example cited by a Member of the Working Group was of how another Authority member had identified an important issue relating to the Communications Centre staff at different locations; of how that Member had endeavoured to raise this matter with senior officers; and the outcomes in terms of how they are currently monitoring work being undertaken to rectify the situation.

It was proposed that the case studies be produced in the form of a booklet for the inspectors. The Chief Executive offered 'The Cumbrian Way' as one (starter) idea for a title; his example of how a keynote theme or a 'brand' could be adopted for the Authority's publications and help set the tone for its whole approach to the scene-setting meeting. The Authority presided over the results of more than 170 years' continuous experience of successful policing in Cumbria. It should be proud of what it had achieved and assert its distinctive appropriateness for Cumbria to the inspectorate.

Working Group Members' preferences for an overall theme for these case studies included 'Safer & Stronger in Cumbria'; DNA; or presenting their case studies in the form of a pack of cards – grouped under the 4 themes or suites with 13 supporting examples. Members also took the view that, when a Member was interviewed, it was important that they were able if necessary to provide additional examples, beyond those examples contained within the published set of case studies and without being limited to them.

Members asked who would be interviewed by the Inspectors. The Chief Executive advised that the Authority could expect in practice to be able have some say in which members or partners were to be interviewed, although the inspectors could always ask to interview *any* member; in addition to those on the list provided. They would be interested in establishing what contribution was made by *all* Members. A Member of the Working Group stated that was why it was essential that all

Members of the authority were provided with relevant information for the forthcoming inspection.

With this in mind, it was agreed that a ring-binder should be prepared for all Authority members, containing basic standard information they would all need to have ready access to; such as the HMIC and Audit Commission Framework and Performance Characteristics documents; the report commissioned from John Dersley Consulting following their pre-inspection review; the 'Cumbrianised' Members' Briefing Notes and Timeline for the inspection which had both been provided to this meeting; and the HMIC Benchmarking 'Information set' comparing the Constabulary with its peers in terms of costs and performance. It was agreed that this folder would be produced and provided to members nearer to the date of the on-site inspection; and any other information could be added as required.

A Member proposed that those Members to be interviewed by the inspectors be offered mock interviews to help them prepare and afford them confidence for when they were interviewed, although such interviews had (for some) been part of the pre-inspection review process already and who exactly would be interviewed could not be guaranteed.

RESOLVED, that the advice provided by the Chief Executive be noted.

5. INSPECTION OF CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

Authority officers had over some time been creating an Inspections Action Plan to help the Authority focus on what work needed to be carried out in preparation for the inspection. The provenance of the proposed actions it contained could be traced from how it had been built-up by officers incrementally in preparation. They had based it upon Authority Members' own critical self-assessment through two successive Strategic Planning Events held at Tebay; upon the commissioned external review of readiness for inspection (Dersley); and upon a resulting 'gap analysis' officers had then made of these against last September's published Performance Characteristics.

The Policy & Performance Officer therefore asked Members of the Working Group to comment and to go through the resulting Inspections Action Plan, highlighting to officers which areas of work identified there they now wished to be prioritised.

An Elected Member advised that, in order to assist the Authority when the inspection team visited its partners, Councillor Members could undertake to speak about its work to town councils, parish councils and other local councils of which they were members; and so raise the profile of the Police Authority.

Members were keen that any work undertaken should provide improvements for the Police Authority for the future, and not just be pursued for the sake of inspection.

The Deputy Chief Executive had been appointed as the lead officer for the inspection and it was agreed that he would need have his workload adjusted accordingly, to be able to carry out this work effectively. A lot of evidence had been amassed by officers but part of his role would be to marshal it under the 4 themes, identifying case studies from them.

Action No 21

It was agreed that the Authority's Strategic Planning Events should tie in more closely with the planning cycle for such things as the development of the Policing Plan and budget processes.

It was noted that the Authority's joint Strategic Coordination event held on 15 January 2010 had expressly been created in order to provide an opportunity for Members actively to discuss budget issues with - and to challenge - the Chief Constable (and the officers of his command team) about them. This was part of the Authority's response to his new structures and a new planning cycle enabling closer collaboration by Members with the Constabulary.

(NOTE: Mrs J Maes left the meeting at this point)

Action No 56

Community concerns were being reported to the full Police Authority, however the Authority still needed to be able to demonstrate better what precise difference it made following receipt of such concerns. A Member asked whether or not the Authority had written to the dedicated Constabulary Schools Officer following the successful '11m Takeover Day' event which the Authority had held at Whitehaven School. The Policy & Performance Officer confirmed to Members that the Authority had written to thank the school and provide feedback but not specifically to the Schools Officer. A letter would therefore be sent out advising them too of what was said by the pupils on the day of the event, and of what Authority Members had done in relation to 'Mosquito' devices.

In relation to the Authority's s.96 Community Liaison Forum meetings, it was agreed that Members should be sure to feedback from these meetings and highlight any problems or issues raised by members of the public. (Including what Members have done to resolve the issues). If these issues are then repeated, Members should ensure that the problem is resolved. Also reiterated was the importance as evidence of Members completing 'Feedback' forms from the meetings they attended, as this provided valuable information to the Authority for use in decision-making. Members asked that the 'Feedback' form itself be updated so it could provide Members with guidance on what information should be included; such as why the Member attended the meeting, what happened at the meeting, and what difference the Police Authority made by being at the meeting.

Action No 58

Those Members also on the Personnel Committee confirmed that, having asked for it, they were now receiving more detailed information in relation to police officer sickness. The members had visited the Occupational Health Unit where they had proposed that staff undertake preventative visits to police stations rather than waiting until an issue arose. The outcome of this was that, at the last Personnel Committee meeting, Members were advised that this was now happening around the force.

Action No 60

It was agreed that a meeting between the Chair of the Police Authority and Assistant Chief Constable Skeer should be arranged to discuss and develop a



more definite format for the Protective Services Panel's scrutiny of such performance.

(NOTE: Mr A Barry left the meeting at this point)

Action No 33

Members agreed that the period during and following the inspection process would provide an ideal opportunity for the Authority to eliminate any non-productive work which it currently carried out. This would then allow Members to concentrate better on the important issues and so not become overburdened.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Inspections Working Group would take place on Thursday 25 February 2010 at 1.00 pm. Members would be advised of the venue.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.