

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Community and Race Relations Committee held on Tuesday 1st November 2005 in Conference Room 1, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith commencing at 2 p.m.

PRESENT

Ms J Lashmar (Chair)

Mr M Ash
Mr R Watson
Mr J Woolley

Also Present:

Clerk & Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Constable (Operations)
Constabulary Race and Diversity Officer
Deputy Clerk to the Police Authority

PART 1 – ITEMS TAKEN IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs C A Egan and Mrs L Slavin.

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the press and public be excluded from the meeting for Agenda Item No. 8, Grievances, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

17. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of any personal interests relating to any item on the agenda.

18. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 July 2005 had been circulated with the Agenda of the meeting.

The Constabulary Race and Diversity Officer reported, with reference to the suggestion in Minute No.7 ("Feedback on the Launch of the Cumbria Multiagency BME Consultation") for IODA to be asked to develop some conclusions based on the research they conducted, the County Council had approached IODA but no response had been received and the County Council had not pursued the matter. A public summary of the findings had now been produced by IODA and the Steering Group had agreed that this be printed as soon as was possible to prevent a loss of momentum from this particular area of work. It was suggested that the Public Summary might clarify some of the concerns expressed by Members at the last meeting.

A copy of the Public Summary to the IODA report would be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

With reference to Minute No.11, "Stop and Search", the Chair advised that the leaflets referred to in the Minutes had now been widely circulated by the Police Authority.

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. POLICE AUTHORITY RACE EQUALITY SCHEME ACTION PLAN - UPDATE

The Committee had previously decided that it wished to see the Action Plan supporting the Police Authority's Race Equality Scheme submitted to it at each of its quarterly meetings in order to enable Members to monitor progress effectively. The Clerk and Chief Executive therefore presented a report, appended to which was the latest version of Action Plan, as amended to reflect further actions effected since the last meeting of the Committee, and advised how the Plan should be endorsed on the front page with the date of its review every time it was updated.

With reference to the Joint Consultation Strategy, which was referred to several times within the Action Plan, Members noted that it was to be submitted to the Consultation Working Group on 7 December 2005 for final consideration before being formally adopted.

Members then considered target 9.1 ("Ensure that different formats of information are available on demand") and noted that this action had been completed. A Member suggested it might be appropriate to list the languages and formats in which information would be made available. The Constabulary Race and Diversity officer informed Members that the Freedom of Information Act required the provision of information in any language, unless it was prohibitively expensive to do so. The Constabulary had access to an excellent translation service operated by Manchester City Council, whose facilities could also be available to the Police Authority.

In similar vein, Members referred to action 9.3 (“Develop a guide for communicating with non English speakers for Independent Custody Visitors”) and suggested that, as Custody Visitors had access to the Language Line service, this action was now superceded by events.

With reference to action 9.2 (“Develop a Race and Diversity page on the Police Authority Website for information”) the Clerk and Chief Executive advised that other pressures on the Authority’s limited resources – in particular the loss of the part-time member of staff trained in the updating software, and now the current restructuring process - had prevented the completion of this action. Members therefore suggested that this information should be included in the Action Plan.

The Chair next referred to target 2.8 (“To have fully developed the framework and schedule for undertaking further reviews of existing functions and policies over the next three years”). The Clerk and Chief Executive advised how, in the prevailing uncertainty over future structures, it had similarly proven difficult to take forward this particular, important action.

Members then gave consideration to the use of the Police Community Liaison Forums (“Section 96 Committees”) and the target set within the Action Plan, the success criteria for which included increased attendance and greater diversity in representation. Members considered the Authority’s approach to arranging and holding Police Community Liaison Forums meetings and suggested ways of further improving attendance by the introduction of, for example, themed meetings with a targeted attendance and alternating venues – for example holding meetings in schools if youth issues were on the agenda. Examples of other initiatives undertaken within Cumbria by individual Committees were quoted and Members reflected on the need to share best practice amongst Committees.

Members noted that any type of consultation undertaken by the Police Authority fell within Section 96 and therefore if specific meetings were held, for example with school sixth form groups, then that was also activity being undertaken within the terms of Section 96 of the Act.

The Constabulary’s Race and Diversity Officer updated the Committee on activity following the commissioning of IODA and expressed the view that progress had been made and that the BME network within the County had been expanded.

Members suggested that it would be appropriate to review the success criteria for the action relating to Police Community Liaison Forums to better reflect the Authority’s aspirations.

Members noted that all of the Members newly-appointed to the Authority in May 2005 had either received Race and Diversity training or would have received Race and Diversity training by the end of the calendar year.

RESOLVED, that the report and comments made by Members be noted and the Action Plan amended as appropriate.

20. USE OF STOP AND STOP/SEARCH POWERS WITHIN CUMBRIA

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report providing data on the use of the new "Stop" powers, as well as "Stop and Search" powers, over the period April to June 2005, the first three months in which they were both in force.

The use of the powers had remained relatively constant and the extent of disproportionality based upon ethnicity of the person stopped was still demonstrably low. However, stop and search continued to be a valuable tactic to prevent and detect crime.

During the period from April to June 2005, the Police in Cumbria stopped 1733 persons, of whom 12 were from an ethnic minority. This figure mirrored the proportion of residents from ethnic minorities within the County. During the same period the Police used stop and search powers on 1490 occasions, of which 26 related to people from an ethnic minority. 14.14% of stop/searches of white people led to an arrest and 76.9% of stop/searches on people from an ethnic minority led to an arrest.

Members welcomed the report and noted the statistical information it contained. In doing so Members noted that statistically the numbers were too small to be regarded as significant.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted and further monitoring reports submitted to the Committee in the future every six months.

21. MEMBERS REPORT BACK

The Chair reported on her recent attendance at meetings of the APA Race and Diversity Policy Group, the Regional Network Forum and the Partnership Seminar convened by the Constabulary and LSP on 28 October.

At the Network Forum meeting reference had been made to a Seminar on IAG's to be held on 24/25 November 2005 in Chester. The focus of the seminar would be on the establishment of IAG's and the Committee considered that it would be appropriate for a Member to attend this event.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Joint Agency Group was to be held in Kendal on 24 November starting at 2pm.

RESOLVED, that
(1) the feedback from Members be noted; and

2) Ms J Lashmar be authorised to attend the IAG Seminar in Chester on 24/25 November 2005.

PART 2 – ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

22. GRIEVANCES

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report which set out the position with regard to the number of grievances lodged in the current year to date and compared this figure with those lodged in previous years. The report included a breakdown of those lodging a grievances in terms of sex and race, and whether Police Officers or Support Staff.

RESOLVED, that the report be received.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm.