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CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Professional Standards Committee held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 2 November 2006 in Conference Room 1, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

PRESENT

Mr A L Barry Ms S E Donnelly
Mr R S Cole Mr J Nicholson

Also Present:

Acting Assistant Chief Constable (Mr P Kirkbride)
Acting Director of Professional Standards Department (Acting Ch. Supt. J Rush)
Administration Manager (Mrs L Rowbotham)

PART I – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

9. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. R Watson, Mrs L L Shaw, Mrs L Slavin, Mr C Alcock (Clerk & Chief Executive) and Deputy Chief Constable Mrs C Twigg.

10. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED, that Mr A L Barry be appointed as Chair of the Professional Standards Committee for the period up to the Annual Meeting in 2007.

Mr Barry in the Chair.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs indicated in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Item No.	Item	Paragraph
9	Grievances	2
10	Police Appeals Tribunal	1

12. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

13. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 July 2006 had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 July 2006, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

14. COMPLAINTS BY THE PUBLIC

The Acting Assistant Chief Constable introduced Members to Acting Ch Supt. J Rush, Acting Director of Professional Standards Department, who was attending his first meeting of the Committee.

The Acting Director of Professional Standards presented the report by the Chief Constable. An addendum to the Complaints Report was also handed out at the start of the meeting.

He informed members that the partnership with Cumbria County Council to use Public Libraries as complaints access points had proved successful and to date 5 complaints had been received.

The Acting Director of Professional Standards reported that, since writing the report, an additional police officer had been suspended from duty, making a total of two.

The Acting ACC discussed the Addendum to the complaints report setting out year to date trends for 2005 and 2006 which showed that only North BCU showed a decrease in complaints. The year to date table showed that trends had been fairly constant, without any significant deviations.

Members discussed the area breakdown which showed the West BCU recording the highest number of complaints in respect of Oppressive behaviour. Members raised various points about the categories shown in the table to which the Acting Director of Professional Standards responded. He explained that the Home Office had created the categories used. The Acting ACC suggested that Members visit his office on the conclusion of the meeting to view the IT systems used when recording complaints as it showed the various categories used in preparing the report for Committee.

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The Acting ACC discussed the number of complaints from West BCU which showed a downward trend during July to September 2006. He explained that work was being undertaken in the West to discuss trends. This had included a presentation to the West senior management team. An update report would be submitted to the Committee setting out the action taken.

He further drew attention to the best practice issues identified in the report, which Members discussed.

The Acting Director of Professional Standards reported that there were no discernable trends in the number of Direction and Control complaints recorded. Members raised various points to which he responded.

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report be noted.

15. DIP-SAMPLING OF PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - UPDATE

The Chair of the Committee asked the Member present who had undertaken the dip sampling of complaints files to report on their findings.

The Member commented that the files were in good order and that the check lists were helpful and easy to work through. They commented on the good level of communication, in written letters, to members of the public and felt that the contents of the files were good.

A list of the files sampled together with a copy of the completed check lists had been forwarded from the Professional Standards Department and would be placed on file with the papers for the meeting.

The Administration Manager informed Members that a date for the next dip sampling of cases would be circulated as soon as possible. This would take place in the Professional Standards Department before the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the feedback from Members be noted; and
- (ii) the date of the next dip sampling of complaints files be circulated to Members of the Committee.

16. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITORS SCHEME – REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL – 30 SEPTEMBER 2006.

The Administration Manager introduced the report by the Clerk & Chief Executive which had been circulated with the agenda papers prior to the meeting. The report covered activity within the Scheme in the six month period from 1 April to 30 September 2006.

She informed Members that the Authority had conducted a successful recruitment programme and as a result Visitors had been appointed in sufficient numbers to

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increase the number on each Panel to at least 15. Out of the 27 visitors recruited 23 attended the Induction Seminar for new Custody Visitors in July. A further induction seminar would be held for the 4 who had been unable to attend training in July.

Members asked whether all the Custody Visitors had signed the new Memorandum of Understanding and the Administration Manager informed them that there was one Visitor who had not signed.

The number of visits made and the number of people in detention seen, during April – September 2006, had increased when compared to the period April to September 2005.

The Chair of the Committee queried the way issues raised by the Custody Visitors had been presented in the report and asked for more details. The Administration Manager responded and explained the details of each of the five concerns included in the report and that they had been satisfactorily resolved. Members thought that the concerns raised by the Visitors should be monitored and asked that an extra column, setting out the issues reported by Visitors, be included in future reports.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the contents of the report be noted, and
- (ii) the Clerk & Chief Executive be asked to amend future Independent Custody Visiting reports to include the additional information as discussed above.

PART II – ITEMS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC.

17. GRIEVANCES

The Acting ACC presented a report by the Chief Constable which showed the number of grievances lodged in the current financial year compared with those lodged in the previous two financial years. Members were informed that this report had also been submitted to the Authority's Personnel Committee.

Members noted that, whilst the numbers were small, there were more grievances reported in West Cumbria than in the other two BCUs. The Acting ACC advised that this matter had been addressed by the Professional Standards Department.

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report be noted.

18. POLICE APPEALS TRIBUNAL

The Administration Manager presented a report by the Clerk & Chief Executive on a request received from a former Police Sergeant, who had been required to resign from the Constabulary in July 2006. The request was for an extension of the 21 day period for the submission of an appeal to a Police Appeals Tribunal. The letter

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of request from the former Sergeant's solicitor had been received by the Authority on 28 September 2006. The matter was considered by the Police Authority Personnel Committee as an item of Urgent business as the 21 day period expired on 6 October 2006.

Members discussed the contents of the report and raised various points which were answered by the Acting Assistant Chief Constable. Members agreed it should be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting that they supported the decision made by the Personnel Committee.

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.

After the meeting had concluded Members accepted the Acting ACC's offer to view the Management Information dashboard which was used by the Professional Standards Department. This system had been devised by the department in order to record and monitor complaints.