

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit and Performance Committee held on Tuesday 7 February 2006 in Conference Room 1, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith commencing at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Mrs L Slavin (Chair)

Mr M Ash
Mrs C A Egan
Mr J Mallinson

Mrs L L Shaw
Mr W Smith
Mr R Watson

Also present:

Assistant Chief Constable (Operations)(Mr G Sunderland)
District Audit Manager (Mr R McGahon)
Police Authority Performance Management and Policy Officer (Miss M Saunders)
Deputy Clerk (Mr S Edwards)

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

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Members being present.

74. 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 during consideration of Agenda Item No.15, Police Negotiating Board Overtime/ Work Life Balance Scheme, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act

75. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of personal interests in any of the items on the Agenda.

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76. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 November 2005 had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

The Chair referred to Minute No 58, Activity Based Costing, and informed the Committee that the use made of ABC by BCU's had been considered at the last Constabulary Performance Development Conference. She believed that it would be useful for Members to be briefed on this matter. The Assistant Chief Constable indicated that he would submit an appropriate report to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED, That (1) the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 November 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair;
(2) a report on the use of ABC by BCU's be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

77. FORCE PERFORMANCE

A copy of the performance report prepared by the Clerk/Chief Executive and Chief Constable had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

The Assistant Chief Constable presented exception reports on call handling, criminal damage, theft of motor vehicles, violent crime, and people killed and seriously injured on the roads.

With regard to **call handling** it was noted that while the local target had not been met for the period in question, the numbers achieved exceeded the national targets in terms of both 999 and non 999 calls. The Assistant Chief Constable stressed that calls not answered within the target time were still answered and overall very few calls were lost. He considered that the introduction of the non-emergency number (0845 3300247) would be of assistance by diverting non-emergency calls from the 999 number.

The Chairman of the Authority reported that he and the Chief Constable had recently met with call handling staff to discuss with them their concerns in relation to restructuring.

Members noted that performance was very much dependent upon staffing levels and that the new shift patterns had not yet been fully implemented.

The Assistant Chief Constable advised that BCU Commanders had been asked to set targets for **criminal damage** for the forthcoming year. It was also receiving considerable focus at LPT level, where it had been identified as an issue of concern. There was no national target for criminal damage. The Assistant Chief Constable believed that criminal damage was a general indicator of levels of anti social behaviour in an area, but it was hard to detect and difficult to tackle pro actively, particularly as it was often not premeditated. However its high visibility ensured that it was a matter of concern to the public. The Constabulary was

working with partners to address criminal damage which had seen an increase of 7.8% on the previous year, though recent months had seen a slowing of this increase. It would become a key priority for the Constabulary.

Members acknowledge that the trend for increase was decreasing, but that there was no overall reduction in the amount of criminal damage being recorded. They also noted that there did not appear to be any pattern though it was often in urban areas and communities tended to lay the blame with younger people. In Carlisle an initiative had been introduced to address the issue through the issuing of Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's).

Members noted that the Assistant Chief Constable had requested further work on the Constabulary's performance in comparison to other forces and they asked that this be presented to the next meeting of the Committee. They expressed the view that whilst the figures told one story their own experiences indicated that Cumbria had no more of a problem than elsewhere.

Consideration was then given to the use of ASBO's, which could be issued by both the courts and local authorities. Members asked for information at the next meeting on the number of ASBO's by BCU area with a breakdown between those issued by the courts and local authorities. They also asked that an indication be provided, if possible, of those ASBO's which had been issued in relation to criminal damage.

Members considered that whilst ASBO's could make a contribution to reducing criminal damage they would not eradicate the problem which was one that required action by a variety of agencies in a partnership approach.

With reference to the **theft of motor** vehicles the Assistant Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary was the fifth in its Most Similar Forces (MSF) group and in relation to the stretching target it had set itself, at the end of November 2005 the Constabulary was 5.5% (82 offences) off target. However there had been a month on month reduction of 33% (34 offences) in November compared with October.

The theft of motor vehicles remained a particular issue in the North and West of the County. The South BCU did not have the same level of vehicle crime as the other two areas.

In considering this particular matter Members raised the issue of resource allocation. They requested a breakdown of staff resources allocated to the BCU's and asked about ways in which the Constabulary could allocated resources to a BCU which had a particular problem at any given time. The Assistant Chief Constable advised that this latter point was addressed by allocation of resources from TSG and MSG, but that overall the Constabulary considered that the resource allocation to the BCU's was appropriate. Members asked that a breakdown of staff resources to BCU's be reported to the Personnel Committee, possibly as part of the personnel data report.

As part of the discussion on the allocation of resources Members asked about the allocation of PCSO's to which the Assistant Chief Constable responded appropriately.

The Assistant Chief Constable then reported on **violent crime**. Although it continued to be off target in comparison with 2004/05, the margin by which it was off target was reducing as the effects of NCRS training came into effect. The Constabulary was now approaching the time when there would be a full years NCRS training reflected in the figures and it was anticipated that this would result in a more realistic year on year comparison. Overall the most recent figures equated to a month on month reduction of 13.4% (113 offences). Overall violent crime in Cumbria was increasing at a lower level than was the case nationally.

Members noted that there were different categories of violent crime within the overall figures and that in Cumbria there was less serious violent crime than elsewhere and overall serious violent crime was a lower proportion of the numbers of violent crimes reported in Cumbria.

(Note: Mr Mallinson joined the meeting at this point.)

Members noted that of the three BCU's the greatest rate of increase was in North Cumbria. The Assistant Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary was aware of this fact and was investigating it though they were confident that they understood the reasons for the different rates of increase between the BCU's.

Members suggested that it would be appropriate to include greater detail in the exception report to ensure that Members were fully aware of the position. In response to a question from a Member the Assistant Chief Constable explained the processes followed internally by the Constabulary with regards to monitoring and addressing violent crime. This was a matter that was constantly under review at Constabulary Performance Development Conferences.

The Chair of the Committee advised that she, in the company of the Chairman of the Authority and the Authority's Performance Development and Policy Advisor attended the Performance Development Conferences. She believed that it would be beneficial if other Members of the Committee had the opportunity to attend those Conferences and suggested that the Authority might usefully develop a system of rotation to enable more Members to attend without increasing the number attending on any one occasion.

Members then gave consideration to the position with regard to those **killed or seriously injured on the roads** in Cumbria. They particularly welcomed the exception report produced for this item which contained considerably more detail than the other exception reports and was, they suggested, a model for use at future meetings.

The Assistant Chief Constable reported that fatalities in 2005 had been the lowest for 11 years and no children had been killed on the roads during the year. This reflected the excellent work undertaken by the Constabulary and its partners, and in particular the considerable efforts made by MSG.

Members then raised the question of racially aggravated offences, which while small in number, had increased. Members considered that this was a matter which should be addressed by the Community and Race Relations Committee.

A Member then referred to the level of shop lifting in Carlisle which was not dealt with as a separate item in the papers. The Assistant Chief Constable advised that shoplifting was an offence which, by definition, only increased when it was detected. There were various factors which impacted on shoplifting, including the number of in house security staff employed by stores. Often these decisions were made at a national level by the major chains and it was not possible to influence them locally. The Constabulary did work with retailers and with partner organisations to address this matter.

RESOLVED, that the report be received.

78. BASELINE ASSESMENT 2005 – PROGRESS AGAINST AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT (OCTOBER 2005)

A report that provided a summary of progress as at October 2005 had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

Members expressed disappointment at the report which they felt did not contain sufficient detail to enable them to consider this matter. The Assistant Chief Constable advised that he too was surprised at the report and considered that an appropriate action plan should have been submitted for Member consideration.

It was noted that the training and human resource elements of the Baseline Assessment were to be considered in detail by the Personnel Committee.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted and a more detailed paper submitted to the next meeting.

79. BEST VALUE IMPLEMENTATION – UPDATE

Members considered a report by the Chief Constable. A full report would be submitted to the April meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

80. CRIME RECORDING

(a) Audit Commission Review of Crime Recording October 2005

Members considered a report by the Chief Constable which provided information on the initial Audit Commission feedback on the findings of the October 2005 review, inclusive of strategy proposals aimed at reducing intensive checking processes. The report also updated the Committee on current crime reporting/recording statistics.

RESOLVED , that the report be noted.

(b) Workington Pilot

The Assistant Chief Constable provided Members with a report on a pilot project at Workington on which work was ongoing. The aim of the pilot was to make call centre staff more proactive in dealing with incoming calls with a view to better managing both the police response to calls and callers expectations.

The Chair reported on a recent interview with the Audit Commission as part of the October 2005 review of crime recording. She welcomed the pilot in the light of comments made by the Audit Commission.

The Audit Manager advised that in the previous year the Audit Commission had had concerns with regard to crime recording, but that the latest review showed the function to be much improved, all be it with a considerable degree of checking. He considered that the issue was to ensure that the recording of crime was done accurately at the outset so that the checks could be reduced to a quality assurance level, rather than a check of all records. Progress made by the Constabulary could be judged when the Audit Commission,s report was formally issued in March.

RESOLVED , that the position be noted.

81. NORTH CUMBRIA BCU HMI INSPECTION FINAL REPORT

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report by the Chief Constable appended to which was a copy of the final HMIC report on the North Cumbria BCU. HMIC were satisfied that all the issues they had raised had been addressed and they had now signed off their involvement with the BCU.

Members welcomed the report by HMIC and acknowledged that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to address the recommendations made by the HMIC. They considered that it was appropriate for the Committee to sign off this area of work.

However, Members still had concerns about performance within the North Cumbria BCU, some of which had been highlighted during consideration of the earlier report on Constabulary performance (Minute No 77 refers). They indicated that they wished to continue monitoring performance in North Cumbria, and would do so through the performance report.

RESOLVED , that the report be noted and the Action Plan signed off.

(Note: The Committee adjourned for lunch from 1.10pm to 1.45pm when the same Members were present. In addition to the officers present in the morning the following officers were in attendance in the afternoon –

Treasurer (Mr D Thomas)
Constabulary Director of Finance and Resources (Mr M Thompson)
Audit Manager, Cumbria County Council (Mr P Usher))

82. EFFICIENCY PLAN UPDATE QUARTER 3, 2005/06

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a report by the Chief Constable which provided an update on progress towards achieving the Constabulary's 3% efficiency target for 2005/06.

During consideration of the report Members sought to clarify what could be defined as "real" efficiency gains. The Treasurer advised that effectively there were three categories of efficiency savings, namely "cashable", "non cashable", and "technical cashable". He explained for the benefit of Members the nature of each of these three categories.

Members made reference to the redeployment of staff from BCU's to projects at Headquarters and were assured by the Assistant Chief Constable that the Constabulary was, through these redeployments, able to achieve more with the use of less resources. The targets the Constabulary set itself were always designed to improve standards. Reference was made to the proposal to develop the marketing function to promote high visibility policing in Cumbria and Members suggested that it would be appropriate to develop a measure against which success could be judged.

RESOLVED , that the report be noted.

83. BUDGET VARIANCE REPORT 2005/06

The Treasurer presented a report prepared jointly with the Chief Constable which covered the first nine months of the 2005/06 financial year and was based on actual spending and commitments up to the end of December 2005 together with estimates for the remaining period. It incorporated the decision made at the meeting of the Police Authority in December 2005 to transfer £1.036 million to an earmarked reserve to meet specific operational costs. The report demonstrated, in the agreed format, details of significant variations from budget.

The overall position at this stage was for spending, after accounting for transfers to and from earmarked reserves, to come inside the approved budget by £0.436 million.

In considering the report Members noted the cost of covering vacancies by incurring overtime.

RESOLVED , that the report be noted.

84. POLICE NEGOTIATING BOARD (PNB) OVERTIME/LIFE BALANCE SCHEME

The Constabulary Director of Finance and Resources presented a report by the Chief Constable and Treasurer the purpose of which was to advise Members of the latest prediction of overtime expected to be incurred during 2005/06 as part of the PNB scheme to reduce overtime by 15% over three years as part of a "life/balance" initiative. The report indicated that the Constabulary were on course to meet the target for the current financial year and therefore meet the overriding reduction required by the scheme. It was not yet clear how this scheme would be progressed at the end of the three years and at the present time the Home Office and PNB were discussing how to maintain overtime at the new, reduced levels.

RESOLVED , that the report be noted.

85. SOUTH AREA BCU FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Audit Manager presented a report on an audit carried out of the financial management and administration of the South Area BCU in December 2005. The review had included meetings with the Finance Advisor for the BCU. Overall the evaluation arising from the audit was "good" with no significant recommendations.

The Assistant Chief Constable advised that he would refer this report to the BCU Commander concerned.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

86. CUSTODY MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AND WEST CUMBRIA BCU'S

The Audit Manager advised that this review represented a significant piece of work that had been conducted in October and forwarded to the Constabulary in December. The Constabulary wished to submit it to the Operations Board before submission to the Committee. In response to a question from a Member the Audit Manager advised that the review was being conducted as part of efforts to link the Audit Plan to the Risk Register. In response to a further question he advised that the North BCU and Operational Support had been reviewed in 2004.

A full report would be submitted to the April meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

PART TWO – ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

87. POLICE NEGOTIATING BOARD (PNB) OVERTIME/LIFE BALANCE SCHEME

The papers under this Agenda item had been circulated for information only.

The meeting ended at 2.15pm.