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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 Wednesday 3 May 2006 in Conference Room 1, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

PRESENT

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

Also Present:

Clerk & Chief Executive (Mr C R Alcock)
Acting Assistant Chief Constable (Mr P Kirkbride)
Acting Head of Professional Standards Department (DCS R Pallas)
Administration Manager (Mrs L Rowbotham)

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

37. MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED, that the appointment of Mrs L L Shaw to the Committee to replace Mr C S Moth be noted.

38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L L Shaw

39. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED, that Mr A L Barry be appointed as Chair of the Committee for the period up to the Annual Meeting on 28 June 2006.

Mr Barry in the Chair.

40. 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

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following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Item No.	Item	Paragraph
13	Grievances	1

41. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

42. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2006 had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 January 2006, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

43. COMPLAINTS BY THE PUBLIC

Before presenting the report on Complaints by the Public, Mr Peter Kirkbride introduced Detective Chief Superintendent Pallas, Acting Head of the Professional Standards Department while Mr Kirkbride was Acting Assistant Chief Constable, to Members.

The Acting Assistant Chief Constable informed Members that his report covered the quarter January – March 2006 and showed, in addition, statistics for the year, 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006. An addendum, entitled “Direction and Control Complaints”, had also been submitted for consideration.

He discussed with Members the number of complaints referred to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) during the last twelve months. Members asked about the number of local resolutions and the Acting ACC informed them that, in order to resolve locally as many complaints as possible, training work was being undertaken with Inspectors throughout the Constabulary.

The trends for the quarter ending 31 March 2006 showed a reduction in recorded complaints. March 2006 showed a considerable decrease when compared with the same month in 2005. Appendix A, which was attached to the report, showed each complaint category, in comparison with the previous year, as a percentage and Members raised various points regarding the changes shown.

The Acting ACC distributed copies of a quarterly publication which had been sent out to all officers and staff entitled ‘Raising the Standard’ which it was hoped would improve individual standards of behaviour and professional standards overall. It contained different articles, including “Trends in Public Complaints; Use of Force;

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E-Mail & Internet; Internal 'Hate' Incidents; and Crime & Custody Issues", together with information on the Professional Standards Intranet Site. Members agreed that a publication of this type would raise awareness of professional standards issues and the Acting ACC confirmed that the publication had been well received.

Members were pleased to note that the breakdown for the year showed complaint levels for each BCU were very similar, with no indication of localised issues. He outlined those Best Practice/Policy Issues which had been identified and dealt with in the period, and Members raised various questions to which he responded.

The Acting ACC drew Members attention to the addendum to the main report, submitted in accordance with the direction and control procedure agreed at the Professional Standards Committee meeting on 23 January 2006. He explained that there had been 35 'Direction and Control' complaints recorded in the past quarter, which were distributed evenly through the BCUs. Monitoring had not revealed any trends.

Members asked for a regular update on the monitoring of 'direction and control' complaints.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the contents of the report be received, and
- (ii) a report on the monitoring of 'Direction and Control' Complaints be submitted to the next meeting of the Professional Standards Committee.

44. DIP-SAMPLING OF PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - UPDATE

The Clerk & Chief Executive reported that Members of the Committee, together with two members of the Authority's staff, had attended training in the Professional Standards Department on the procedure for 'dip-sampling' public complaints files. Members agreed that the training had proved very informative and gave an insight into the procedures.

As a result two Members had been nominated to attend Professional Standards Department, before the scheduled meeting of this Committee, to carry out the dip-sampling of files and a verbal update was given by them on the procedures in place. The Members reported that they had experienced some slight difficulties with the check-lists to be completed during the process of dip-sampling and matching the contents of files examined. The Acting ACC agreed that the forms could be amended to ensure the information contained was more user-friendly.

Members had agreed that quarterly visits should continue to be undertaken by pairs of Members, with the combination of Members attending varying on each occasion. A schedule of dates and rota of Members undertaking dip-sampling in the Professional Standards Department was being prepared in advance of the next Committee Meeting.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

RESOLVED that the feedback from Members be noted.

45. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME: REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2005 TO 31 MARCH 2006.

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting. He explained the different sections in the report, which set out the number of Custody Visitors in Cumbria together with the number of visits each Panel had made during the period October 2005 to March 2006.

After each visit, Custody Visitors submitted a report form to the Authority and the majority of these stated there were no matters of concern. The report still identified five issues which had been raised, which Members discussed with the Clerk & Chief Executive.

He informed Members that an Independent Custody Visiting Conference was being arranged at Police Headquarters on the 24 June 2006, at which there would be a presentation of Long Service Awards to Custody Visitors who had served more than six years on the Scheme by the Chairman of the Authority, Cllr. Reg Watson.

Members discussed the request from a Custody Visitor on the West Cumbria Panel for a twelve-month break from the Scheme.

RESOLVED, that:

- (1) the report be noted: and
- (2) approval be given for the identified Custody Visitor from the West Cumbria Panel to take a twelve-month break from the Scheme.

Note: David Knight, Regional Director, Kevin Hamilton, Senior Investigator for the North West and Manir Avsar, Head of Case Work Function, from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), joined the meeting.

After a 5-minute break the Chair welcomed the visitors and re-convened the meeting.

46. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME: CODE OF CONDUCT

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented the report previously circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

He explained that, currently, all Independent Custody Visitors in Cumbria were required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on joining the Scheme (Appendix 1).

The Clerk & Chief Executive reported that a nationally-circulated document, entitled "Strategic Planning and Independent Custody Visiting", had been received from the Independent Custody Visiting Association (ICVA). It was designed to

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support existing guidance issued by the Home Office and this document included a model Code of Conduct for Independent Custody Visitors. (Appendix 2.)

Members discussed the contents of the documents and raised various points to which the Clerk & Chief Executive responded. The Authority had already adopted in outline and was applying minimum standards of ethical behaviour to be attained locally by Visitors, but it was felt that the new document, based as it was on national experience, was rather more complete and would assure more consistent standards being observed nationally, as well as locally.

RESOLVED, that

- (1) the model Code of Conduct be adopted for use in Cumbria;
and
- (2) all Independent Custody Visitors in Cumbria be required to sign the Code of Conduct.

47. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2006/2007

The Acting Head of Professional Standards presented the Report, attached to which was the Professional Standards Departmental Plan 2006/7. He explained that these documents had been submitted for information purposes only and to give the Committee an insight into the work of the Department.

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report and the Professional Standards Departmental Plan be noted.

48. DRAFT CODE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR POLICE OFFICERS – APA CIRCULAR 12/2006

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented his report to Members. An APA circular advised of consultation currently being undertaken about the latest Draft Code of Professional Standards for Police Officers. Attached to the circular was the current Code, together with correspondence from the Home Office with the proposed revised Code of Professional Standards and associated guidance.

Members discussed the detail of the report and noted that the closing date for the consultation process was 19 May 2006. No particular matters were identified for specific representations about the terms of the latest revision.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

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

49 GRIEVANCES.

The Acting ACC presented a report which had also been presented to the Authority's Audit and Performance Committee and showed the number of

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grievances lodged in the current year so far, compared with those lodged in the previous two fiscal years. He informed Members that there were no emerging trends identified in the grievances reported.

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report and supporting statistics be noted.

The Formal Business of the Meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.

David Knight, the Regional Director; Kevin Hamilton, Senior Investigator (North West); and Manir Avsar, Member of Casework function, respectively, from the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), then gave a presentation entitled: "*IPCC – 2 Years On*".

The Meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.