

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

**Minutes of a Special Meeting of Cumbria Police Authority held on
Monday 28 November 2005 at Police Headquarters,
Carleton Hall, Penrith commencing at 4.00pm.**

PRESENT

Mr R Watson (Chairman)

Mr A L Barry

Mr R S Cole

Ms S Donnelly

Mrs C A Egan

Mrs P M Halfpenny

Mrs M Johnson

Ms J Lashmar

Mr J Mallinson

Mr C S Moth

Mrs L L Shaw

Mrs L Slavin

Mr W Smith

Also present:

Clerk & Chief Executive, Mr C.R. Alcock

Treasurer, Mr D. Thomas

Chief Constable, Mr M Baxter

Deputy Chief Constable, Mrs C. Twigg

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr G Sunderland

Assistant Chief Constable, Mr N Rhodes

Constabulary Director of Finance and Resources, Mr M Thompson

Constabulary Head of Strategic Development, Ms J. Davies

Chief Superintendent R Smith

Constabulary Head of Marketing and Communications, Ms G. Shearer

Constabulary Business Support Manager, Mrs S. George

Police Authority Policy & Performance Development Officer, Ms M Saunders

Deputy Clerk, Mr S. Edwards

Superintendent J Clayton, Home Office Review Team Representative

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

109. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M Ash, Mr J Nicholson and Mr J Woolley.

**110. URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND
PUBLIC**

(a) Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

(b) Exclusion of the Press and Public

Members gave consideration to whether the nature of the information to be discussed in relation to Agenda Item No.5, "Police Structure Review – Phase Two Police Authority Briefing Paper" necessitated the item being taken in the absence of the press and public.

The Clerk & Chief Executive explained to Members why officers had placed the Chief Constable's report in Part 2 of the Agenda. He outlined the options available to Members with regard to consideration of the report and stressed that this was a matter for decision by Members.

RESOLVED, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the press and public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of Agenda Item No. 5, Police Structure Review – Phase Two Police Authority Briefing Paper, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 11 (Industrial Relations) and 14 (Prevention, Investigation and Prosecution of Crime) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act

111. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

The Deputy Clerk informed Members that the Authority's Standards Committee had met that morning and agreed to grant the requests from Members for dispensation to speak and vote at this and future meetings on the police force structures review.

112. POLICE STRUCTURE REVIEW

(a) Combined Consultation Report

Members considered a paper submitted jointly by the Chief Constable and Clerk & Chief Executive that reported the outcome of the consultation conducted by the Authority and Constabulary regarding police force structures.

A MORI poll had been commissioned and 1,000 members of the public in Cumbria had been surveyed. In addition the Authority had sent out 456 questionnaires in mid-October to stakeholders and members of the public and, at 17th November, 194 questionnaires had been returned, a completion rate of 43%. The results of the consultation could be summarised as follows –

- The majority of the public consulted did not support merger.
- The majority of stakeholders consulted support merger.

- There was least opposition for a merger with Lancashire.
- The greater the number of forces merging, the less support from the public.
- Reduced local policing, local say and local control were the biggest concerns.
- The majority of the public believed that local policing would get worse following a merger.
- Stakeholders envisage some benefits with merger.
- The public's belief that control and funding of the police would move out of the county was stronger than the belief that a new force would be better placed to tackle organised crime and to counter terrorism.
- Stakeholders believed a larger force would be better placed to tackle organised crime and counter terrorism.

The Chief Constable drew particular attention to the fact that 72% of those surveyed for the MORI poll were satisfied with the policing service they currently received.

Members expressed some concern that, as on previous occasions, a significant consultation exercise had produced an outcome that, for reasons beyond its control, the Authority could not deliver. Ultimately this had the potential to undermine the credibility of the Authority.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

(b) Governance

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report appended to which was an APA briefing note that set out the most recent thinking on governance issues in the light of the police structure review.

The Chairman read out a position statement agreed by Police Authority Chairs at the Association of Police Authorities (APA) Conference held the previous week.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

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

113. POLICE STRUCTURE REVIEW

(a) Phase Two Police Authority Briefing Paper

The Chief Constable presented a paper summarising the work undertaken during the second phase of the review of police structures in the North West Region, by the Cumbria Constabulary project team working in collaboration

with the Police Authority and other forces across the region. It set out the options for potential new structures, following Home Office guidance after the submission of the phase one business case on 28 October, and outlined the issues the Constabulary had been requested to address in phase two.

The paper put into context a number of appended documents in summarising environmental factors, risks and benefits, consultation with communities and cost information. It set out position statements in relation to areas of work currently in progress.

The Chief Constable advised Members that his professional duty was to provide the Authority with the best possible advice available to him. At the present time he did not consider that the information gathered during phase two of the police force structures debate was sufficient to enable the Authority to make an informed decision as to its preferred option. He therefore recommended to Members that the decision be deferred to the December meeting of the Authority by which time the final business case would have been completed and presented to the Authority.

Members reiterated their concerns, as expressed at previous meetings, about the timescale imposed by the Home Secretary for the completion of the police force structures review. They referred back to the report presenting the findings of the consultation undertaken as part of the review that demonstrated that the people of Cumbria did not wish to see the Constabulary merged with any other police force.

They also noted the potential costs of the possible merger options and the fact that the Home Office were currently unable to provide assurances with regard to assistance with meeting those costs. If any new merged Authority had to bear the set up costs in full then it could impact on the ability to provide additional funding to tackle level two crime – the reason for proposing mergers. The view was expressed that it might be more economical to provide existing forces with additional funding to improve their performance with regard to level two crime, especially in Cumbria's case where overall performance in most other areas was high. The Chief Constable advised Members that he had already commissioned this work.

Members also expressed concern at the economic impact on Cumbria as a whole if employment currently provided by the Constabulary was relocated outside the county.

RESOLVED, That

- (1) as the information gathered during the second phase of the review of police force structures is insufficient to enable the Authority to make an informed decision as to the preferred option the decision on a preferred option be deferred until the meeting of the Police Authority on 15 December 2005, when the final business case will be completed and presented; and

(2) the interim position statements set out within the Chief Constable's paper be noted.

(b) Financial Considerations

The Treasurer tabled a report that provided a commentary on the financial aspects of the paper presented by the Chief Constable relating to the two regional options and national aspects of the review process which were required to be addressed by government if Authorities were to reach robust decisions on whether to request the Home Secretary to endorse a case for voluntary merger(s). He would report further on this matter to the December meeting of the Police Authority.

He alerted Members to the fact that over the next few days finance staff would be under immense pressure with work now required to take forward two options, rather than the one anticipated at this stage, together with the preparation of budget reports and a report on the draft Local Government Financial Settlement due on 5th December for the Authority meeting on 15th December.

RESOLVED: that the Treasurer's report be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.40 p.m.

Chairman: **Date:**