

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY
AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit and Performance Committee held at 10.00am on Thursday 3 March 2005 at Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

PRESENT

Mrs L Slavin (Chair)

Mrs K E Brandwood
Ms J Lashmar

Mr W Smith
Mr I Stewart

Also present:

Clerk & Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Constable (Operations)
Assistant Chief Constable (Organisational Development & Partnerships)
Constabulary Director of Resources
Director of Information Management and Technology
Acting Chief Superintendent A Davidson
Cumbria Criminal Justice Board Performance Officer
Mr P Usher (Management Audit Unit, Cumbria County Council)
Deputy Clerk.

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

70. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs K Brandwood and Mr R Watson.

71. EXCLUSION OF 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 the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs indicated of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act:-

Item No.	Item	Paragraph No.
19	Civil Claims	1
20	Grievances	1
21	IT Network Controls	14

72. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

73. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 November 2004 had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

It was reported that both the Clerk & Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) had written to the Home Office expressing concern that both South and North Cumbria BCUs were in the same family of BCUs. To date no reply had been received. Members expressed their disappointment at the lack of response from the Home Office and asked that both officers write again seeking a response

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29 November 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

74. OFFENCES BROUGHT TO JUSTICE - PRESENTATION

Acting Chief Superintendent A Davidson and the Cumbria Criminal Justice Board Performance Officer made a presentation to the Committee that included –

- a definition of Offences Brought to Justice (OBTJ)
- current and future OBTJ and Public Service Agreement targets
- profiles of performance
- examination of key influencing factors on performance
- an overview of the way forward including multi agency working and the adoption of new policies and procedures to help meet future targets.

Copies of the slides used in the presentation had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

Following the presentation the Assistant Chief Constable (Organisational Development & Partnerships) commended the positive position within Cumbria which saw Cumbria as the third best performing force in the country. However, there were areas in which the Constabulary could improve its performance, such as file quality and timeliness, which would further enhance its position nationally. Processes were already in place to improve performance in the medium term but he had, following discussions with the CPS, put in place measures which should also see an immediate improvement in performance. He advised that there were variations in performance between the BCUs and it was important to identify good practice so that all areas of the Constabulary were operating at the same high level.

Members expressed their appreciation for the presentation and noted the comments made by the Assistant Chief Constable (OD&P).

RESOLVED, that the presentation be received.

(Note: Acting Chief Superintendent Davidson and the Cumbria Criminal Justice Board Performance Officer left the meeting at this point).

75. FORCE PERFORMANCE

(a) Force Performance Report to December 2004

Before presenting the Force Performance Report the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) briefed Members on recent changes to the management team in the North Cumbria BCU. These changes had been made after a follow-up visit to the BCU by HMIC. He expressed his confidence that the performance issues identified by the HMIC would be addressed and a noticeable improvement in performance achieved within the 90 day period set by HMIC.

He asked Members to bear in mind that the BCU was being judged by HMIC on its performance against certain key indicators, and this took no account of the considerable amount of good work which had been undertaken in North Cumbria, such as the development of the Local Policing Team project and improvements achieved in public confidence following an increase in visible patrols.

The new Acting Chief Superintendent for the BCU had been asked to develop an action plan and to have this finalised by 4 March.

The Assistant Chief Constable (OD&P) stated that Members should also bear in mind that Cumbria overall was a high performing force and that Carlisle itself was not a high crime area, though it was acknowledged that crime had been rising in Carlisle. The BCU family within which Carlisle was placed, and therefore compared, was composed of other BCUs which were not high crime areas. Overall Carlisle was a relatively safe place to live.

Members welcomed the briefing and asked that they be kept abreast of developments. Members also asked that the Committee have sight of the action plan being produced to take the BCU forward. The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) advised that he would ascertain whether or not the Committee would be able to see the Action Plan – this would require clarification with HMIC.

Members then raised the issue of inspections being conducted by HMIC and others and suggested that it would be appropriate to develop a mechanism which notified Members of all inspections taking place and advised them of outcomes, in particular alerting them to any adverse outcomes.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) stated that he had recently asked for a schedule of all inspections to be conducted over the next twelve months and once finalised this would be shared with the Police Authority.

Members then considered the Force Performance Report to December 2004.

In considering the report Members paid particular attention to the position concerning violent crime and noted the Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) explanation that the category of crimes classified as violent crime was extremely wide, ranging from very minor incidents to murder. The actual numbers of physical assaults was relatively low but the high number of arrests for disorder, made before a physical assault had taken place, were included within the violent crime category. Physical assaults in an on street situation were reducing. It was probably true to say that the violent crime category included crimes which ordinary people would not categorise as a violent crime. The breadth of the category did not serve to provide reassurance but facilitated in the creation of unfavourable headlines. It was probably not the case that there was more violence now than had occurred a few years previously, though the statistics would seem to indicate that that was the case. Members suggested that it might be appropriate for the Authority to ask the APA to raise with the Home Office the possibility of disaggregating some of the crimes classified as violent crime so that it would be possible to more accurately identify the issues. It was noted that it would be possible to do this in Cumbria but it would not then be possible to compare those findings against those of Cumbria's most similar forces. The need for clarity in discussions about violent crime, which was an emotive issue, was important.

Members also noted that whilst acknowledging that violent crime was a problem, it should be considered in the context of the fact that there was only a 1.3 % chance of an individual being involved in any violent crime incident in Cumbria.

With further reference to information on violent crimes it was suggested that it would be helpful for the Authority to receive the breakdown of area information provided to CDRPs as that would assist in Members having a full picture of the problem.

Members also considered the position with regard to road accidents resulting in death and serious injury, noting that in North Cumbria the numbers had doubled in December. The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) expressed his frustration at what could be done to prevent these accidents as whilst reducing the number of road traffic accidents was an appropriate target it was not one which the Constabulary could address alone.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the report be noted; and
- (ii) the Clerk & Chief Executive write to the Association of Police Authorities asking them to raise with the Home Office the possibility of introducing some disaggregation into the violent crime category.

(b) Efficiency Plan Update – Quarter 3 2004/05

The Director of Resources presented a report to Members which provided an update on progress towards achieving the 2% efficiency target for 2004/05.

RESOLVED, that the current position and planned action be noted.

76. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION.

The Chair advised Members that she had recently conducted a visit to West Yorkshire Police Authority in the company of the Clerk & Chief Executive to the Police Authority and the Director of Information Management and Technology. This had been a very useful fact finding visit. She then invited the Director of Information Management and Technology to make his presentation to the Committee.

The Director of Information Management & Technology advised Members that there were three levels of information, namely performance review; performance management and operational management.

He was seeking to develop systems which used common data, common tools, standard forms of presentation and standard structures. The information technology to achieve these aims were already in place, but had not previously been used by the Constabulary to achieve the desired aims. As a consequence it was possible to introduce many positive changes fairly quickly without the need to purchase or develop new applications. As part of his presentation he shared with Members slides of information demonstrating the quality and timeliness of the information which could be provided.

The Chair thanked the Director of Information Management & Technology for his presentation and Members welcomed the work undertaken which they believed would be of considerable benefit to both the Constabulary in its operational role and the Authority in its monitoring function.

(Note: Mr W Smith left the meeting at this point)

77. VEHICLE RECOVERY SCHEME - UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) presented a report which updated the Committee on the position with regard to the management and operational problems identified within the Vehicle Recovery Scheme and the actions being taken to address them. He informed Members that 26 recommendations had been made for improvements in the Scheme and of these 23 had been completed and it was anticipated that the three outstanding recommendations would be completed by the end of March.

He advised Members that he would submit a further report to the next meeting of the Committee when he anticipated it would be possible to sign off this particular area of activity.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted and a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

78. HER MAJESTYS INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY – BASELINE ASSESSMENT 2005 - UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable (Organisational Development & Partnerships) presented a report, the purpose of which was to provide an update on the current position with regard to the Baseline Assessment of the Constabulary being conducted by HMIC and to outline the anticipated next steps.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

79. BASELINE ASSESSMENT – FINANCE AND RESOURCES

The Director of Resources presented a report the purpose of which was to inform Members of the outcome of the 2004 HMIC Baseline Assessment for Finance and Resources which took place during June 2004. In addition an action plan prepared in response to the HMICs baseline assessment had been prepared and was appended to the report for the information of Members. The Director advised that a number of the actions identified in the action plan had already been completed.

RESOLVED, that the report and action plan be noted.

80. BEST VALUE REVIEWS IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Constable (Organisational Development and Partnerships) presented a report, the purpose of which was to update Members on the current position regarding the monitoring of implementation of Best Value Review recommendations.

Work on this area of activity had been delayed as staff undertaking the work had been diverted to work on the recovery programme following the storms in Carlisle in early January. It was the intention that proposals for a revised schedule of recommendations would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting.

RESOLVED, that the report and revised implementation – monitoring process be noted.

(**Note:** The Assistant Chief Constable (Organisational Development & Partnerships) left the meeting at this point)

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

The Director of Resources introduced a report, the purpose of which was to advise Members of the latest prediction of overtime expected to be incurred during 2004/05 as part of the PNB Scheme to reduce overtime by 15% over 3 years as part of a life balance initiative. The report indicated that, based on the information currently available, the Constabulary was on course to meet the target for the current financial year.

Members noted that the supporting papers for this item, which now contained considerably more detail than had previously been the case, had been circulated separately in Part II of the Agenda.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

82. QUARTERLY BUDGET VARIATION REPORT

The Director of Resources presented the third Budget Monitoring report for 2004/05 which was based on actual spending on commitments to the end of November and estimates for

the remaining four months of the financial year. It showed, in the approved style, details of significant variations from budget.

The overall position at the current stage was for spending to come inside the approved budget by £0.245 million, incorporating proposals made at the last meeting of the Committee in November and endorsed at the budget meeting of the full Authority in February to contribute to a number of earmarked reserved.

The Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that with reference to the underspend identified in the Police Authority element of the budget this reflected a positive decision made by the Authority at the time it was subject to the council tax nomination process to delay appointment to new posts agreed as part of the budget for the year. The process of filling the posts had now been taken forward, with an appointment made to the post of Performance Management and Policy Officer and an advert placed for the post of part-time clerical assistant.

Members thanked the Director of Resources and his staff for the considerable amount of hard work that they put in to both developing the budget and ensuring it was managed appropriately. The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) echoed the sentiments expressed by Members and added his appreciation for the work of the Director and his staff.

The Director thanked Members for their kind words and undertook to pass their comments on to staff.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

83. PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE STATUTORY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PNC

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report which advised Members of the introduction of a Statutory Code of Practice for the Police National Computer (PNC) which had been developed under the terms of the Police Reform Act 2002 and had come into effect on 1 January 2005. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) had responsibility for auditing Force Performance against the standards in the Code of Practice and had a role in the process agreed to address poor performance.

There were two key indicators at the core of performance monitoring, namely timeliness of input of arrest/summons reports and court results. The standards agreed were –

- arrest/summons – 90% of all records to be input within 24 hours;
- court results – 50% of all results to be input within 7 days (rising to 75% within 7 days from 1 July 2005).

Members noted that the national average being achieved by December 2004 in relation to arrest/summons information was 84%. For inputting court results the service average was 59%.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) advised Members of the position in Cumbria, making particular reference to performance with regard to the inputting of court results.

Discussions had taken place with the courts and an action plan developed to take the Constabulary forward. Staffing levels were an issue in this particular area and any staff sickness could have a significant impact on this performance.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

84. PAYROLL

Mr Usher introduced a report produced as the result of an audit conducted in line with the agreed internal audit plan for 2004/5. No recommendations had been made as a result of the review.

Payroll was the largest area of expenditure for the Authority and generated a high volume of transactions. As a consequence the controls operated over the system were reviewed annually by Internal Audit.

As well as Police Staff the allowances paid to Police Authority Members had also been scrutinised. Travel and subsistence payments to staff and Police Authority Members would be reviewed in 2005/06.

Members and the Director of Resources indicated their pleasure in receiving such a positive report.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

85. POLICE NORTH AREA BCU

Mr Usher presented a report of a review of the North Cumbria BCU conducted in December 2004. The review had covered the areas of financial management, planning, performance management and risk management.

Members indicated their surprise and concern, in the light of subsequent events, that the review had not classified as “weak” any of the areas of activity reviewed. They expressed the view that some of the comments made in the text of the report would indicate that the evaluation should have been graded at a lower level than that actually awarded.

Mr Usher advised that the evaluations were a matter for judgement and they had been independently moderated within the Internal Audit Department.

With reference to the report he advised Members that there was some concern that the performance management framework was almost wholly geared to performance reviews conducted by the Assistant Chief Constable and that other areas were neither updated nor prioritised.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) advised that this was acknowledged and he had introduced a more robust performance management culture including quarterly conferences chaired by the Chief Constable and monthly monitoring reviews which he conducted. The availability of the information now being provided by the Director of Information Management and Technology was also of benefit.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

86. POLICE OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Mr Usher presented a report of a review conducted into the Operational Support Department in December 2004. The review had specifically covered financial management, planning, performance management and risk management.

The review acknowledged that Operational Support was a large and diverse department. Issues identified in the review included the need for the development of performance targets for communications and inputting and that despite the efforts of the Support Inspector to obtain relevant information this was not being provided. However it was acknowledged that the department did have good practice in some areas such as monitoring attendance.

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) advised that the Constabulary was aware of the issues and that in certain areas of operational support activities, such as counter-terrorism, it was difficult to identify appropriate performance measures.

Members noted that two recommendations, namely those relating to the development of regular performance measures for operational performance and the development and active maintenance of an up to date record of all performance indicators, had been graded as level 1 (i.e. major recommendations that indicated a fundamental control weakness and must be addressed). This made these two recommendations of particular concern.

The Assistant Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary was aware of these issues. He reiterated that it was difficult to develop performance measures for all areas of activity. The Best Value Review of Operational Support was focussing some of its attention on the development and active maintenance of up to date records of performance indicators which should go some way to addressing the second of the two recommendations.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

87. RISK MANAGEMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

Mr Usher advised Members that a review of Risk Management arrangements had been included in the 2004/05 internal audit plan. As the Audit Commission had carried out an initial corporate review of this area in early 2004/05 and reported on this in August 2004, it had been agreed to concentrate on following up progress on the agreed Action Plan produced following the Audit Commission report.

In addition risk management had also been included in area reviews and the findings on these had been reported separately for the North Cumbria BCU and Operational Support.

No recommendations were made as part of the review as key staff within both the Authority and Constabulary knew what was required and were planning to achieve these ends.

The Clerk & Chief Executive advised that a Member had received risk management training as part of the training programme introduced by the Constabulary and he had been in discussions with the Force Solicitor to take forward shared issues.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

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

88. CIVIL CLAIMS

The Assistant Chief Constable presented a detailed report which showed the number of active civil claims against the Constabulary, both public liability and employer liability, and the number of civil claims which had been settled or otherwise completed since the last report submitted to the Committee.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

89. GRIEVANCES

The Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) presented the grievance statistics report to Members.

The report provided a breakdown of those submitting grievances by gender, ethnicity, police officers and police staff. The report also listed grievances which involved alleged discrimination in terms of race and gender.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

90. IT NETWORK CONTROLS - UPDATE

The Director of Information Management & Technology provided Members with a verbal update on this matter, which had been the subject of an internal audit report to the last meeting of the Committee.

He advised Members that the Constabulary was on track with both the recommendations and timescales set out in the original report by Internal Audit.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

91. POLICE NEGOTIATING BOARD OVERTIME/WORK LIFE BALANCE SCHEME

The papers circulated under this item were for information only.

The meeting ended at 1.40 p.m.