

**CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY**

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Personnel Committee held on Tuesday 11 July 2006 in Conference Room 2, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith commencing at 10.00am.

**PRESENT**

Mr R Watson (Chairman)

Mrs M Johnson  
Mrs L Slavin

Mr J Woolley

**Also Present:**

Chief Executive (Mr C R Alcock)  
Acting Chief Constable (Mrs C Twigg)  
Acting Director of Personnel and Development (Ms J Bancroft)  
Constable Prom Gurung  
Deputy Clerk (Mr S Edwards)  
UNISON Representative (Mrs H Thompson)

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

**1. MEMBERSHIP**

The appointment of Mr J Bland as a Member of the Committee was noted.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Bland.

**3. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED,** that Mr R Watson be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

Mr Watson in the Chair

**4. 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 for the following items on the grounds that they

## NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

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
13	Special Priority Payments	1
14	Police Force Amalgamation – Personnel Issues	1
15	Police Staff Discipline	1

### **5. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS**

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

### **6. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED,** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 May 2006 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **7. RACIAL ABUSE AND ASSAULT OFFENCES AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS**

The Acting Chief Constable introduced Constable Prom Gurung to Members. He had just been recognised as the Constabulary's 'Probationer of the Year'. Police Constable Gurung was based in Carlisle and had used his experience of encountering racially-motivated offences whilst on duty to suggest amendments to reporting forms and procedures within the Constabulary; suggestions which had led to changes in the Constabulary's Hate Incident Policy.

Constable Gurung then addressed the Committee himself. Prior to joining Cumbria Constabulary he had served in the British Army for 20 years, making reference to how personal experience, like witnessing race riots in South-East Asia requiring Army intervention, had informed his own understanding of these issues.

For the last two years he had served in Carlisle, where he believed the majority of the minority ethnic community were content with the service provided by the Police; their confidence appearing to have been restored following the events of 7 July 2005. An increase in the number of high visibility patrols, together with advice given about the protection of premises, had helped to see a reduction in incidents. He then spoke to the Committee about his personal experience of racial incidents whilst serving as a Police Officer. He was very pleased to see the Constabulary so willing to address the issues he had raised as a result of his experience. However, he was still concerned that the racial abuse suffered by Police Officers was too often overlooked as an "occupational hazard" and discounted, whereas complaints made against Police Officers were all taken extremely seriously and investigated thoroughly. He therefore considered that the balance should be redressed and more people charged when they had committed a racially-motivated offence against a Police Officer.

A Member referred to the concern raised by a Magistrate Member of the Authority when she had become aware of racial incidents committed against Police Officers coming before the Courts in Carlisle. As a result the Authority had asked to be briefed on this matter, since it wished to see what more could be done constructively to address the situation.

The Acting Chief Constable advised that the Constabulary had learnt a lot from the experiences of Constable Gurung and other officers. As a consequence it had amended its reporting forms and procedures to address the issues raised. The Constabulary would continue to work together with its Police Officers to address these matters. It was important that a culture was developed where people were willing to come forward and report incidents of abuse against Police Officers, so that they were no longer simply regarded as an “occupational hazard”.

Constable Gurung stressed to Members that the vast majority of the community within which he worked welcomed him and treated him with respect; any difficulties described were only experienced with a small minority. He believed that the way to address the issues he had experienced was through education, so that over time there was greater harmony within the community.

The Chairman thanked Constable Gurung for attending the meeting and his contribution.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be received.

(Note: Constable Gurung left the meeting at this point).

## **8. PERSONNEL DATA REPORT**

The Acting Chief Constable presented a report composed of statistics compiled from HMIC and Personnel Department Data. The report covered various measurable aspects of the Personnel function.

Areas of particular importance included –

- a total of 49 new recruits were successful after SEARCH Assessment Centre held in April;
- a new intake of 15 Officers took place during the period covered by the report, the second under the IPLDP process
- a PCSO Assessment Centre was held in May and over 220 applications were received. A number of applicants were successful and were currently undertaking the next stages of the process.

In response to a question from a Member, the Acting Director advised that the amalgamation process had begun to have an impact on how many staff were leaving the Constabulary. The Acting Chief Constable advised that the actual numbers attributable to the merger were not high at this stage, even if they included some important specialisms.

In response to a further question from a Member concerning the promotion of female staff, the Acting Chief Constable advised that nationally there was an issue in getting officers of either gender to seek promotion from Constable to Sergeant. However, this was not an issue of significant concern in Cumbria. Overall she was pleased with the situation with regard to the promotion of female officers within Cumbria and the proportions of those putting themselves forward for promotion and being successful were high. The Constabulary was actively encouraging female officers to seek promotion with a view to encouraging a culture in which female officers believed that they could achieve high rank.

The position was slightly more difficult for police staff than for police officers as there was a less-clear career path for them to follow.

Members noted the position with regard to the promotion of BME police officers.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be received.

#### **9. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS SICKNESS ABSENCE BREAKDOWN, 2005/06**

Members considered a report by the Acting Chief Constable on PCSO sickness absence which had been submitted to the Committee in response to a request made at the last meeting.

The Constabulary had on average 17 PCSO's in post at any one time and during the year 70.59% had had at least one period of sickness absence.

From the beginning of the 2006/07 financial year the Occupational Health Unit had introduced police recruit level medical standards and fitness tests to the assessment process for all new PCSO's and the impact of this would be measured at the end of the year.

Members reiterated their concern from the previous meeting that the reason for sickness absence might be difficulties coping with the job, rather than overall fitness. The Acting Chief Constable advised that only two PCSO's had presented with psychological disorders and it was not possible to tell whether they were work related.

Sickness levels amongst PCSO's in Cumbria were not out of line with the national sickness rates.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be received.

#### **10. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME**

The Chief Executive presented a report, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the outcome of the recent recruitment exercise for Independent Custody Visitors and to provide feedback on the Independent Custody Visiting Conference held at Carleton Hall on Saturday 24 June.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be noted.

### **11. COSTED HUMAN RESOURCES PLAN**

The Acting Chief Constable presented the costed human resources plan for 2006/07. Home Office Circular 18/2002 required Forces to produce annual costed human resources plans, and agree them with their respective Police Authorities.

In considering the Plan, Members made specific reference to sickness levels - and whether the amalgamation process had impacted upon sickness - and the cost of Superintendents. The Acting Chief Constable advised that there had been a 'spike' in sickness absence in May but there was no indication of any long-term problem. With regard to the cost of Superintendents, the Constabulary now had an additional post, plus two 'acting-up' posts at that level.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be received.

### **12. INITIAL POLICE LEARNING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - SUMMARY**

The Acting Chief Constable presented a report which provided the Committee with an update on the Initial Police Learning Development Programme (IPLDP) and the move of initial training of Police Officers from the former District Training Centre at Bruche to local training within Cumbria.

The first 22 week course, involving 15 student officers, had now been successfully completed and the second course of 15 students would start on 26 June 2006, with a third course to run concurrently, starting in September 2006. The officers from the first course were with tutors in Area.

The CENTREX National IPDLP Implementation Team had visited Cumbria and assessed the programme. In the main the feedback was positive, with an action plan being prepared for the areas that required further work.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be noted.

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

### **13. SPECIAL PRIORITY PAYMENTS**

The Acting Chief Constable provided a verbal report for Members. The Constabulary was currently drafting its fourth Special Priority Payments Scheme which it was anticipated would replicate the scheme adopted last year with some minor amendments

**RESOLVED,** that the report be noted.

### **14. POLICE FORCE AMALGAMATION – PERSONNEL ISSUES**

The Chairman and the Chief Executive briefed Members on their joint attendance at a meeting at the Home Office on the previous day, where the Policing Minister had advised that - as it was not possible for the Home Office to address the issue of precept harmonisation - the amalgamation process was to be discontinued. The Authority would meet formally on 25 July to consider whether – as it surely would - its voluntary offer to amalgamate was to be withdrawn.

The Acting Chief Constable advised that, as a result of the process, lessons had been learned about alternative ways of operating and the Constabulary had looked at its processes. This would be beneficial in the future regardless of the position with regard to amalgamation. There was also the possibility of continuing to work with Lancashire in some specific areas.

The UNISON representative stated that UNISON had appreciated the openness of Chief Officers throughout the process, but the fact was that they believed the vast majority of police staff were pleased that it was not to proceed.

The Acting Chief Constable then briefed Members on the likely impact of the abandonment of the amalgamation process on police officers and police staff. One lesson learnt or benefit from the process was the excellent relations enjoyed between staff associations and the Constabulary within Cumbria.

Only a few staff had been lost as a result of the amalgamation process to date. The Constabulary would now be reviewing its vacancy management policy in the light of the changed circumstances.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be noted

## **15. POLICE STAFF DISCIPLINE**

The Acting Chief Constable presented a report which informed Members of police staff disciplinary activity in the period 20 April to 20 June 2006.

**RESOLVED,** that the report be received.

The Meeting ended at 11.40am