

CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Personnel Committee held on Monday 27 February 2006 in Conference Room 2, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith commencing at 10.00am.

PRESENT

Mr R Watson (Chairman)

Mrs M Johnson
Mr J Mallinson

Mrs L Slavin
Mr J Woolley

Also Present:

Clerk & Chief Executive (Mr C R Alcock)
Director of Personnel & Development (Mr G Noble)
Deputy Clerk (Mr S Edwards)
Representatives of the Police Federation and Unison.

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

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

40. 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 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
14	Police Staff Discipline	1
15	Police Authority Treasurer – Terms of Employment	1

41. DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

42. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 6 October 2005 had been circulated with the Agenda for the meeting.

In response to a question from a Member concerning the possibility of out sourcing work to enable monthly updates to be made available to the Training Department (Minute No. 22, Training Function Business Plan refers) the Director of Personnel and Development advised that the problem referred to at the previous meeting had been solved by the provision of low cost software.

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RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 6 October 2005 be confirmed as a correct record.

43. PERSONNEL DATA REPORT

The Director of Personnel and Development presented a statistical report compiled from HMIC and Personnel Department data reporting on various measurable aspects of the personnel function during the third quarter of 2005/06. Areas of particular importance highlighted for the Committee were –

- The third intake of 14 new recruits for 2005/6 was undertaken during the reporting period, and in addition a BCU Area Commander was also appointed on transfer;
- The number of female officers in Cumbria remained well above the national average and 60% of the officers appointed in the reporting period were female;
- Promotion processes to sergeants, inspector and superintendent had been held during the period and overall 22 males and 5 females were successful;
- Since implementation of the Police Officer Extension of Service Scheme, interest had continued to increase with an additional 6 officers successful in their applications during 2005/06, bringing the total of officers retained to 8;
- The total number of duty hours recorded for Special Constables in 2005 stood at 31,928 compared to 18,212 in 2004; this represented the highest number of duty hours recorded since 1998 when there was an average of 200 Special Constables compared with the present average of 132;
- The Constabulary was on target to attract maximum Crime Fighting Fund grant payments through achieving optimum police officer numbers as at 31 March 2006;
- 97% of police officer PDRs and 84% of police staff PDRs were completed within 60 days of the due date – this gave an overall total of 94% of PDRs completed within the 60 day requirement as set by HMIC; and
- The Constabulary continued to support the secondment of officers to central service functions.

Members congratulated the Constabulary on the excellent position achieved with the Special Constabulary, acknowledging the additional effort made to attract, train and retain Special Constables of high quality. Reference was also made to the "30+" scheme, and comments made by the Police Federation representative were noted.

Members asked that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing an explanation of the way in which the promotion processes worked. Members also asked that, in future, they receive timely notice of senior appointments, especially of officers with whom the Authority had contact.

RESOLVED, that the report be received.

44. SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT – THIRD QUARTER 2005/06

The Director of Personnel and Development presented the Force Sickness Absence Report for the period 1 October to 31 December 2005.

Since April 2005 all forces had been required by the Home Office to record sickness absence in a way that ensured accurate comparators could be made between forces. The report submitted to Members now reflected the recording of actual rostered hours and rostered shifts lost. The Committee was asked to note that the NSPIS HR system did not allow the recording to be made in a way that made these figures available and the Occupational Unit had been required to develop a parallel method of recording sickness absence.

In considering the report Members focussed on sickness levels in the West Cumbria BCU and Operational Support. They noted that sickness absence in West Cumbria was significantly higher for police officers and higher for police staff. The Director of Personnel and Development advised that this was a matter for concern and was a priority for the new BCU Commander. Staff in Occupational Health had studied this matter and there were no great differences in the range and type of reasons for sickness. Sickness absence levels were simply higher in the West Cumbria BCU. Further time and effort would be devoted to attempting to address the issue.

With regard to Operational Support it was noted that the levels of police staff absences were considerably higher than in any of the BCUs or within Headquarters and that there had recently been a significant jump in the level of sickness absence. The Director of Personnel & Development advised that Operational Support had historically had a higher than average level of sickness absence but that this was now at a lower level than had previously been the case. Sickness absence in this area was being dealt with using corporate sickness reduction measures,

Members then gave consideration due to psychological disorders and the Director of Personnel & Development provided information on support provided by the Constabulary.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted

45. TRAINING FUNCTION SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Head of Personnel & Development presented a paper by the Chief Constable that provided the Committee with a progress report following the initial report made to the Committee in October 2005. The report contained –

- a summary of outstanding actions from the original plan, forming the basis of the 2006/07 Improvement Plan; and
- the original Improvement Plan with notes and progress reports attached.

Members gave consideration to the suggestion that the Authority should develop more robust means of monitoring the Improvement Plan. The Police Authority's Lead Member for training advised that as part of the recent HMIC inspection he had been interviewed but had been left unsure as to what specifically HMIC were looking for from the Authority in terms of more robust monitoring. His personal view was that HMIC were not giving the Training Department the credit they deserved for the improvements that had been made.

Members suggested that it might be appropriate, once formal feedback on the recent inspection had been received, to request HMIC for examples of good practice that the Authority could use to improve in this area. They also noted that peer review of the Police Authority's role would come into effect from May 2006.

With regard to the overall Service Improvement Plan, Members noted that the issues where concern was being expressed related to management, supervision, evaluation, and oversight; rather than the actual provision of training. It was noted that the training function did not have sufficient staff to carry out the management, supervision, and oversight roles which HMIC wished to see, without withdrawing staff from front-line training. As in other areas of activity, the Constabulary ran a "tight ship" which did not always have the necessary spare capacity to take on additional demands as a result of inspections.

Members suggested that it might be appropriate to focus training provision on certain key areas to free up resource to undertake the management, supervision evaluation and oversight being requested by HMIC. The Director of Personnel & Development advised that this had been undertaken to a degree, but further focussing could lead to the loss of delivery of extremely important areas of training.

Finally Members considered that the Plan before them could be sharpened up with the word "ongoing" being replaced by specific dates as deadlines for when items would be undertaken. They also quoted specific areas within the Plan where they felt a sharper focus would be of benefit.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) progress against the Training Function Service Improvement Plan be noted; and
- (ii) the draft Service Improvement Plan for 2006-2007 be approved.

46. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Director of Personnel & Development advised Members that in October 2005 HMICs Baseline Assessment of Human Resource Management rated the Constabulary as "Poor but Improved". The HMIC report recognised strengths and highlighted areas for improvement.

Appended to the report circulated with the Agenda was a copy of the Personnel and Development Service Improvement Plan which outlined the issues raised by HMIC. The Director advised that HMIC had recently re-visited the Human Resource Management Function and had verbally acknowledged the improved performance management and improvements made.

In considering the Service Improvement Plan Members made specific reference to the staff retention measures put in place by the Constabulary, and received a briefing from the Director.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

47. STATUTORY CODE OF PRACTICE ON RACIAL EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT.

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report which briefed Members on the purpose, status and application of the recently issued "Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Employment". A full copy of the Code was available in the Police Authority office.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

48. PERSONNEL POLICIES

The Director of Personnel & Development presented a report by the Chief Constable that informed Members of the Personnel Policies approved and implemented between 1 September 2005 and 10 February 2006. The Policies were –

- Refreshment Expenses (Police Officers)
- Leave Policy
- Bonus Scheme Policy (Police Officers)
- Policy on the 30+ Retention Scheme (Police Officers)
- NVQ Policy
- PDR Policy.

The Director advised Members that in addition a Dress Code Policy had been approved for implementation on 3 April 2006.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

49. SENIOR OFFICER DEPLOYMENTS

The Director of Personnel & Development provided Members with a verbal update on a number of recent changes to senior officer deployments within the Constabulary, including some made as a result of promotions.

Members welcomed the report and stressed the need for them to be aware of changes at an early date as they often had contact with the officers concerned. Reference was also made to the manner in which these changes could sometimes be reported at public meetings and the impact that the manner of reporting could have on public perceptions.

Members requested a paper copy of the verbal report delivered by the Director.

RESOLVED, that the report be received.

50. APPOINTMENT OF A MAGISTRATE MEMBER TO THE POLICE AUTHORITY.

The Clerk & Chief Executive advised Members that, from 1 April 2005, the Courts Act 2003 abolished Magistrates Courts Committees; hitherto the mechanism by which Magistrate Members of the Police Authority were appointed. The responsibility for the appointment of Magistrate Members now lay with the Police Authority itself.

There would shortly be a vacancy for one Magistrate Member with effect from 1 April 2007. This was in addition to the existing vacancy for an Independent Member. The report by the Clerk & Chief Executive set out the process which had been begun towards filling such a Magistrate Member vacancy.

Members gave careful consideration to the appointment of both a Magistrate and Independent Member, giving particular thought to the implications of the decision to volunteer to merge with Lancashire made by the Authority on 24 February. In this context they now considered it inappropriate to proceed further with either appointment process and agreed that the vacancies should not be filled. The Home Office should be notified of this action.

RESOLVED, that the present vacancies for Independent and Magistrate Members of the Police Authority should be left unfilled, subject to Home Office agreement.

51. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – DATE OF MAY MEETING

The Chairman reported that the date currently set for the May meeting of the Committee (4 May) coincided with the date of District Council elections.

RESOLVED, that the May meeting of the Committee be held on Wednesday 3 May, commencing at 1 p.m.

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

52. POLICE STAFF DISCIPLINE

The Director of Personnel & Development presented a report by the Chief Constable which informed Members of police staff disciplinary activity between 15 September 2005 and 10 February 2006.

RESOLVED, that the report be received.

53. POLICE AUTHORITY TREASURER – TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report asking Members to consider making a series of revisions to the terms of employment of the Police Authority's Treasurer, a part-time post.

In considering the report, Members noted that the Treasurer had for some considerable time demonstrably been working a larger number of part-time hours than the number for which he was contracted; even above the level of commitment appropriate from a professional member of staff. Members spoke highly of the Treasurer and commended his commitment and contribution to the Authority. His role would be particularly important in the coming months as the Authority and Constabulary moved forward with the proposed merger with Lancashire.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the number of specified days per week to be worked by the Treasurer be increased to 2 ½ ;
- (ii) the Treasurer's salary be increased to the equivalent of £65,000 per annum full time (£32,500 pro rate for 2.5 days per week) with effect from 1 April 2006; and
- (iii) an honorarium of £5,000 be awarded to the Treasurer as an acknowledgement of the excess hours he had worked to date.

The Meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.

Note: Before the meeting Members met informally with the representatives of the Police Federation and Unison.