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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 Thursday 20th July 2006 in Conference Room 2, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

PRESENT

Mr R S Cole
Ms S E Donnelly
Mr J Nicholson

Mrs L L Shaw
Mrs L Slavin
Mr R Watson

Also Present:

Clerk & Chief Executive (Mr C R Alcock)
Director of Professional Standards Department (Chief Supt. P Kirkbride)
Administration Manager (Mrs L Rowbotham)

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

1. MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED, that the appointment of Mrs L Slavin to the Committee be noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A L Barry and Deputy Chief Constable Mrs C Twigg.

3. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Members discussed the appointment of Chair for the coming year. As Mr Barry had given apologies for absence and it was not known whether he wished to be nominated for election as Chair it was decided that the decision be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee. Members agreed that Mr R Watson should Chair the meeting on this occasion.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the election of Chair of the Committee for the period up to the Annual Meeting on 28 June 2007 be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 2 November 2006; and

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- (ii) Mr R Watson be appointed Chair for the meeting.

Mr Watson in the Chair.

4. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no Part 2 items to be considered.

5. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

6. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 May 2006 had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

Minute 46 – Independent Custody Visiting Scheme: Code of Conduct. Members enquired about the number of Custody Visitors who had not signed the Code of Conduct. They were assured that the number was very low. The Custody Visitors concerned would be contacted again and asked to reply within a set time.

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 Chair.

7. COMPLAINTS BY THE PUBLIC

The Director of Professional Standards Department presented the report by the Chief Constable. Members noted that this included the Direction and Control complaints information requested at the last meeting of the Committee.

He informed Members that the Constabulary had been represented at the national ACPO Professional Standards Conference. The HMIC Thematic “Raising the Standard” which had been published in June contained 19 recommendations and 10 suggestions which were currently being considered by the Constabulary. He commented that Cumbria received two mentions in the Thematic for best practice: one for management of suspension and welfare and another for their use of the ‘True Vision’ pack which promoted the public complaints system. Members asked about the ‘True Vision’ pack and the Director of Professional Standards explained the document, its contents, and would produce copies for Members’ inspection by the meeting’s end.

There were two, current, managed investigations, although the Director of Professional Standards informed Members that, since writing the report, there were 2 additional managed investigations now being undertaken. These were both

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from West Cumbria. Members expressed concern at the number of complaints arising from the western area when, compared with other BCU's. After a discussion, Members requested a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee regarding the complaints arising from West BCU.

(Note: Mr D Hitch, Professional Standards Department, delivered copies of the True Vision Pack to the meeting)

The Director of Professional Standards reported that the trends for the quarter to 30 June 2006 were 86 against 81 for the same quarter last year. When complaints were compared by situation it showed a definite increase in complaints arising from arrests or public order incidents. This could be linked to the 'Respect' Campaign or the drive to improve performance in violent crime. The Area breakdown table showed that the West had the highest number of complaints, particularly in the area of "Unprofessional Conduct". Members discussed the contents of the table which showed the Area Breakdown for the year, in particular "Incivility", and raised various points of detail to which the Director of Professional Standards responded.

He further drew attention to the best practice issues identified in the report, which Members discussed.

The 'Direction and Control' complaints shown in the report were fairly evenly distributed across the three BCUs. The Director of Professional Standards informed Members that the only discernible trend was that 11 of the complaints in the quarter related to traffic issues and that further research would be undertaken.

The Director of Professional Standards concluded by discussing the Race and Equality complaints shown in the report. He informed Members that a Guidance for Supervisors on responding to internal hate incidents had been approved and this would be incorporated in to the Force Hate Crime policy and Force training.

RESOLVED, that

- (i) the contents of the report be noted, and
- (ii) a report regarding complaints arising from the West BCU be submitted to the November meeting of the Professional Standards Committee

8. DIP-SAMPLING OF PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE - UPDATE

The Clerk & Chief Executive asked the two Members who had undertaken the dip sampling of complaints files to report on their findings.

Both Members had found the quality of the documents on the files they had sampled to be good. They commented that the check lists were extremely useful and suggested that it would be less time consuming if documents were placed on the file in the order set out on the lists.

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A list of the files sampled together with a copy of the completed check lists had been forwarded from the Professional Standards Department and would be placed on file with the papers for the meeting.

The Clerk & Chief Executive announced the proposed dates for the next dip sampling of cases. This would take place in the Professional Standards Department before the next meeting of the Professional Standards Committee and asked if any Members would be available to attend.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the feedback from Members be noted; and
- (ii) Ms Donnelly and Mr Watson undertake the dip sampling of complaints files at 10 a.m. on 26 October 2006 in the Professional Standards Department.

The meeting ended at 11.07 a.m.