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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 Monday 23 January 2006 in Conference Room 3, Police Headquarters, Carleton Hall, Penrith.

PRESENT

Mr C S Moth (Chair)

Mr A L Barry
Mr R S Cole

Mr J Nicholson
Mrs L Slavin
Mr R Watson

Also Present:

Clerk & Chief Executive (Mr C R Alcock)
Deputy Chief Constable (Mrs C Twigg)
Head of Professional Standards Department (Chief Superintendent P Kirkbride)
Deputy Clerk (Mr S Edwards)

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

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms S E Donnelly.

15. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 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 Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Item No.	Item	Paragraph
8	Complaint Against Senior Officers-Update	1,5,7,14
9	Independent Custody Visiting Scheme – Outcome of Appeals Process	1

30. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

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

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 November 2005 had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 1 November 2005, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. COMPLAINTS BY THE PUBLIC

Circulated with the agenda had been a report on Complaints by the Public submitted by the Chief Constable. Tabled at the meeting was a further supporting paper relating to the recent HMIC inspection of Professional Standards.

Members raised with both the Head of the Professional Standards Department and the Deputy Chief Constable various points relating to the Baseline Assessment.

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that the Chief Officers would make conscious decisions about the use of resources and their targeting against recommendations made by HMIC. She did not anticipate bidding to the Authority for any additional resources for this area of activity. HMIC expressed a view and Chief Officers exercised their professional judgement in the use of the Constabulary's resources. Over the course of a year HMIC produced several reports into isolated areas of Constabulary activity without cross-referencing the financial or other implications of their recommendations. That role was for chief officers to undertake. Members noted that there were currently two police officers suspended, and that the Constabulary had recently used the "Fast Track" procedures for the dismissal of a police officer for the first time. The Deputy Chief Constable advised that at a future date she would take Members of the Committee through the process which had been followed.

Overall complaint trends for the third quarter (October to December) were down 39%.

Members raised various points with the Deputy Chief Constable and Head of Professional Standards Department with regard to the best practice and policy issues addressed in the report submitted by the Chief Constable. .

RESOLVED, that the contents of the report be received.

33. DIRECTION AND CONTROL COMPLAINTS

The Head of Professional Standards Department presented a report which provided Members with an update on developments since the last meeting. Appended to the report was a proposed procedure for agreement by the Authority,

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which, if approved, would be incorporated into a Constabulary policy on the recording and handling of complaints.

He thanked the Clerk & Chief Executive for his assistance with the development of the procedure.

In considering the proposed procedure a Member questioned whether there might be a role for Police Authority Members where a direction and control complaint involved another public authority, for example a Parish or Town Council concerned about local policing. The Deputy Chief Constable reminded Members that direction and control was the responsibility of the Chief Constable and expressed concern that there could be accountability and other issues for Police Authority Members to consider if they became involved in the process. However, she felt certain that if there was any occasion when the Chief Constable felt that the Police Authority could make a contribution to the process then he would contact the Police Authority at that time.

RESOLVED that the procedure, as circulated with the agenda, be approved.

34. DIP-SAMPLING OF PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Head of Professional Standards Department presented a paper which provided an update on discussion at the last meeting of the Committee on the development of a local procedure for dip sampling of public complaints. The procedure before the Committee had been developed in consultation with the Committee Chair and the Clerk & chief Executive.

If the procedure was approved it would be incorporated into a Constabulary Policy into recording and handling of complaints.

Members welcomed the proposed procedure. Members gave careful thought to the number of occasions on which they should attend the Professional Standards Department to dip sample closed files. The frequency of dip sampling visits had to balance the number of files closed in a month, the demands placed upon the Department in accommodating a dip sampling visit and dip sampling being taken frequently enough to provide public reassurance. Members also gave consideration to the need for training in undertaking dip sampling.

The Deputy Chief Constable reminded Members that there were many checks and balances within the complaints procedure and that the specific role for the Police Authority was to satisfy itself that the system was working and that the Constabulary's processes were open to scrutiny.

Members considered that on the first occasion all Members should attend for a training session, but that thereafter quarterly visits should be undertaken by pairs of Members, with the combination of Members attending varying on each occasion, but with all Members undertaking an equal number of visits over a period of time.

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RESOLVED that

- (i) the procedure as circulated with the agenda be approved; and
- (ii) all Members of the Committee attend for training in dip sampling in the next quarter, and that thereafter quarterly visits by two Members of the Committee in rotation be undertaken, subject to review at a future date.

(Note: The Deputy Chief Constable and Head of Professional Standards left the meeting at this point)

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

35. COMPLAINT AGAINST SENIOR OFFICERS - UPDATE

The Clerk & Chief Executive presented a report which updated Members on complaints made against senior officers.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

36. INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING SCHEME – OUTCOME OF APPEAL PROCESS

The Minutes of a meeting of the Professional Standards Committee Appeals Panel held on 5 December 2005 had been circulated to all Members.

RESOLVED, that the Minutes of the Professional Standards Appeal Panel be received.

The Meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.