



CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

Thursday 16th November 2006.

OMBUDSMAN REJECTS COMPLAINT

The final outcome of a complaint made about Cumbria Police Authority to the Commission for Local Administration in England (the Local Government Ombudsman) was reported to a meeting of the full Authority, in Penrith, on 15th November 2006.

A small group of people from Houghton had identified themselves in the press (News & Star, 14th September 2006) as originating this complaint - under the title of '*Residents Against Custody Suite*'. It harked back to the planning application put in by police for a custody unit at Houghton, finally rejected on a majority vote by the City Council in October 2005, after a campaign run under this title. Their complaint about that application and how it was handled by the Authority had begun with the Standards Board of England but, after the Board declined to investigate the matter, they had lodged similar claims with the Ombudsman instead, in September 2006.

The Ombudsman had stated their intention to investigate the complaint and asked the Authority for its response, which was to refute the allegations. After receiving the Authority's written observations, then further representations from the complainants (including meeting them in person) the Ombudsman has finally notified the Authority that this is not a complaint which the Ombudsman is willing to pursue any further. The investigation has been discontinued accordingly and the complaint closed.

Cumbria Police Authority's Chief Executive, Clive Alcock, who also functions as the Authority's monitoring officer, said the Commission's role under the Local Government Act 1974 - of investigating allegations of maladministration by public authorities - is an important protection and it is vital that members of the public feel they can bring matters to their attention. However, in this particular case, the Police Authority was pleased to hear of the Ombudsman's decision and that it had finally brought these claims to a close.

[Ends.]

News Release

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Editors' note:

Cumbria Police Authority is made up of local people - a mixture of councillors, magistrates and independent members - and acts as the bridge between Cumbria Constabulary and all communities across the county in policing matters. Legally, it owns all the buildings and land in the police property portfolio and is responsible for:

- *setting the budget for Cumbria Constabulary, including raising local council taxes for policing;*
- *consulting and engaging with local communities in Cumbria to find out what they want the local police to tackle;*
- *setting the strategic direction for policing in Cumbria; deciding local priorities for policing and setting the Constabulary challenging targets to drive performance higher*
- *appointing (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Chief Constable; Deputy Chief Constable, and Assistant Chief Constables;*
- *monitoring and managing local police performance.*

Further information: *Clive Alcock, Clerk & Chief Executive; or Stuart Edwards, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, at the Cumbria Police Authority office, Carleton Hall, Penrith CA10 2AU.*

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