

# NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

30 MARCH 2007

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| Agenda<br>Item |  |
| Report<br>No   |  |

## FORCE REVIEW PROJECT

### Report by the Chief Constable

#### SUMMARY

This report updates Board Members regarding the Force Review Project.

#### Background

On 20 January 2006, the Chief Constable advised the Board of his intention to carry out a fundamental review of the Force during the coming financial year to ensure that operational capacity could be sustained. The ongoing need to develop local and national policing responses was recognised, as was the significant economic growth that has taken place across the Highlands and Islands over recent years.

The Force Review Project was initiated in April 2006 with the remit of examining key issues including:

- delivery of policing services
- reduction of bureaucracy associated with police officer time
- identifying potential improvements to enhance operational capacity and capability

This work was to be fully aligned with the Force's devolved resource management and community policing approach.

A general update was provided to the Board on 25 August 2006 in relation to progress made against the project plan to deliver the Review. Phase One of the project involved conducting the Review itself, and reporting findings to the Project Board by March 2007. Phase Two of the project will deliver implementation of approved recommendations over the next 2 years.

#### Project Overview

The project was progressed with a clear and deliberate theme to support operational policing with four key objectives for delivery.

1. Evaluate and develop Northern Constabulary's key management of crime processes, in terms of their capacity to promote efficiency and effectiveness within the Scottish Criminal Justice System.
2. Identify key opportunities to enhance organisational capacity and capability.
3. Review Northern Constabulary's key corporate support functions to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in terms of being 'fit for purpose' and supporting operational activity.

4. Align Northern Constabulary's organisational structures, footprint and service delivery with the activities and strategic directions of key partner organisations.

Northern Constabulary is recognised as a Force that provides a high level of service with some of the best performance results in the United Kingdom. Despite this, consultation and examination clearly demonstrated that fundamental change was required in a number of areas to bring about efficiencies and improve organisational capability. Areas which required organisational development could be categorised in general terms as being:

- Information management
- Use of technology
- Organisational capacity and capability
- Functional structure

Review established that the Force's key information management processes were complex and resource intensive, with a number of both operational and support departments performing a variety of overlapping functions to deliver the end product(s).

Independent study identified that 18.5% of the Force's available resource time (police and support staff) was spent on processing information. This was the highest in Scotland by a significant margin and represented the second highest unit cost per crime report in Scotland. The exercise recorded that in the case of Northern Constabulary the 'information burden' was being borne by front line staff, with 37.2% of the total cost of routine processing of information falling into the 'non-value adding' category.

When considering this position and the growing need for accurate performance management information, it was clear that the Force required a more corporate approach to information management, tailored to: ease of data capture, submission and processing that was less resource intensive, reduced bureaucracy and was capable of meeting the Force's current and future needs in this critical area. **A number of recommendations concerning information management were therefore made for consideration.**

Review confirmed that the Force's primary operational and performance management IT solution was outdated, resource intensive to populate and was unable to readily adapt to current needs. In general terms, the Force's IT applications were no longer suitable for contemporary policing or organisational requirements, so increased staffing and repetitive audit was required to secure the most rudimentary data.

It was clear that the Force required to exploit technology in order to secure business benefits for mainstream policing and support processes, and thereby enable improvement to overall capability. It was identified that the key to achieving real process improvement and efficiency saving lay in the adoption of a comprehensive records management system. **A number of recommendations concerning the application of information and communications technology were therefore made for consideration.**

In considering the future capabilities of Northern Constabulary, the Force Executive provided clear direction in its aim to increase the availability of front line officers. This was coupled with an overarching objective to identify opportunities which could enhance organisational capacity and capability, ensuring best use of valuable resources.

Review established that the replication of resource intensive process functions throughout the Force had inhibited the level of potential growth in terms of policing capacity and capability.

This factor had often made collaborative working, flexible resource deployment, event policing and dealing with incidents more problematic.

The support staff establishment required to maintain the Force's operational and support service model was seen to have grown significantly over the past decade to its present level, representing the highest support staff member to police officer ratio in Scotland (1 to 1.55). It was evident that the adoption of less resource intensive systems and processes would allow a more aggregated approach to provision of support, based on functional requirements, providing relevant efficiency saving to support the Force in its primary role of policing.

Opportunities to achieve greater police visibility and more productive use of police resource were also identified through potential release of officers presently in non-essential roles returning to core policing.

**The review made several recommendations to enable improvement of organisational capacity and capability through modified process, use of technology, and resourcing.**

A strategic approach was taken in examination and revision of the existing territorial policing structure. The retention of a community policing and devolved resource management approach were treated as prerequisite conditions for this study, aimed at retaining coterminosity with Local Government boundaries wherever possible to facilitate joint initiatives and partnership working, whilst preserving the continuity and identity of local policing with communities.

It was considered that both the corporate and local policing needs of the Force would be better served by maintenance of local policing teams grouped into larger territorial 'Divisions'. Greater resilience and flexibility within and between operational units was deemed a key aim. The provision of centralised support was also examined in terms of potential improvement and ability to enhance organisational capacity and capability.

The timing of this work coincided with Highland Council's Local Government reorganisation planning and consultation, which had arrived at a new boundaries model comprised of 3 'operational management areas' constituted by 22 multi-member wards covering the Highland Council area. These areas had primarily been constructed to reflect equity of population and services. Island Councils had not been affected by such changes, which were driven by the Local Government reform and proportional representation agenda.

The review examined a series of potential policing models, each being complemented by inclusion of geographic responsibility for selected Island Command Areas. The models were subjected to objective analysis in respect of known policing demand and functionality, and presented to the Force Executive for consideration. This process established the proposed future policing model comprising 11 local 'Area Commands' grouped into 3 Superintendent led 'Divisions'. (North, Central, East). Each Division reflects a relatively equitable population and demand profile, being 95% coterminous with Local Authority boundaries.

It was considered that the model would deliver significant benefits to the Force. Operational benefits included more flexible use of resources and opportunities for collaborative working, with the potential to set suggested minimum thresholds of policing capability across the Force area, which would more readily facilitate joint initiatives and mutual aid. The structure provided a more streamlined and dynamic command model placing appropriate emphasis on the role of local police commanders.

The revised model provided a number of business benefits which importantly included efficiency saving through economy of scale achieved by reduction of process duplication in areas such as crime administration and financial management. **The review therefore made a number of recommendations concerning future structure and associated matters.**

## **Conclusion**

On 2 March 2007, the formal review report was submitted to the Project Board. The report contained 20 strategic recommendations, accompanied by a number of suggested actions linked to these recommendations. The project board confirmed closure of Phase One of the project and approved progression of Phase Two. The recommendations made were remitted to the Force decision making process (Policy Forum) for discussion and direction.

On 8 March 2007, the Deputy Chief Constable presented the review recommendations to members of the Force Policy Forum. The 20 recommendations made by the review were discussed and agreed for implementation.

The Board in noting the current position of the Force Review is also advised that the Chief Constable will at the June meeting of the 'new' Police Board invite the appointed Convener to accompany him in individual briefings with the four Local Authority member groups; and the time will then be right, as we begin to consider the detailed implications of implementation, to extend a further invitation for the Board to nominate two members to represent their views on the Review Programme Board.

Whilst largely a review of operational policing delivery and support, this complex programme of change requires the active engagement and support of the Police Board as this work is progressed by the Chief Constable and his team during the next two to three years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Board has an awareness of the outcomes and future implementation of the Force Review and notes the current position.

**I J Latimer**  
**Chief Constable**