

# NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

29 JANUARY 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

## NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD – CONSIDERATION OF EFFICIENCIES

### Report by the Clerk

#### **Summary**

Further to the discussions at the last Board meeting, the purpose of this report is to consider how the Northern Joint Police Board can reduce costs and improve efficiency in the management and running of the Board.

#### **Background**

1. At its meeting held on 27 November 2010, the Board discussed the 2010/11 Revenue Budget and approved the Efficiency Scrutiny Plan presented by the Chief Constable, for Northern Constabulary. Further to discussions, about how the Board could also seek to reduce its costs, a paper was requested dealing with efficiency in respect of Northern Joint Police Board.
2. Members are reminded that the Board is a statutory body constituted under the Northern Combined Police Area Amalgamation Scheme Order 1995. This Statutory Instrument prescribes the number of Members on the Board from each Constituent Authority and permits the appointment of Substitute Members. It also requires the Board to appoint a Clerk and a Treasurer. The Order allows the Board to determine where and how often it meets.

#### **Current Position**

3. The charge for NJPB for 2008/09 for support services was £180,000; this included the costs of supporting the Police Service and the Board, including the running of the Clerk's Office (£63,000) and Treasurer's services (£94,000). Costs include travel for officers to attend Board meetings outwith Inverness. A charge is also made for Legal Support including the Monitoring Officer (£22,000).
4. Members' additional salary payments and travelling and subsistence expenses are also charged to the Board and in 2008/09 the total charged was £41,000.
5. The NJPB, at its last meeting, agreed to appoint a Policy Development Officer to support the work of the Board. This post will add a further £40,000 (maximum) to the annual budget.

### **Potential for Future Efficiency**

6. Staff Support – the current level of staff support within the Clerk’s Office is limited and the Board has already made the decision to increase staffing by appointing a Policy Development Officer for an initial period of 12 months. The level of expenditure in respect of Legal Services is also limited. The costs for Treasurer’s Services include statutory functions, i.e. accounts and internal audit, and also services provided to the Police Service. However, it is recommended that the Clerk and Treasurer review their costs in order to identify any potential for efficiencies.
7. Use of Technology – currently the Board does make some use of video conferencing to take part in Working Groups, which are held in Inverness. The cost of travel and subsistence associated with Board and Working Group meetings could be reduced if the use of video and telephone conferencing was increased further. As this represents a good opportunity for savings, it is recommended that Members agree to use video conferencing to attend working group meetings, where the cost of travel would be greater than the use of video conferencing.
8. Printing & Postage – currently, agendas for Boards and Working Groups are posted to all Members. Costs could be reduced if Members agreed to Working Group agendas being issued by email only.
9. Travel and Subsistence – the greater use of technology (as outlined in paragraph 7), particularly for attendance at Working Groups, would reduce costs. Travel arrangements are already purchased as cost effectively as possible with group bookings, for Island visits, benefiting from discounted rates. However, arrangements will be continually reviewed to ensure this continues to represent value for money. In relation to costs associated with overnight stays then it is proposed that this is reviewed to allow consideration of reducing costs. This should include overnight stays only being agreed where essential (due to the non availability of transport facilities), i.e. Orkney and Shetland.
10. Scheduling of Meetings - In relation to the holding of Board meetings on the Islands, then the Board has already made a decision that this should continue, in order to ensure proper representation of the population across the Board area and within all four constituent authorities. Island visits also provide the Board with important opportunities to understand the challenges of service delivery in locations across the Highlands and Islands, and to enhance their scrutiny of the police service. Board should note there will be no Island meetings in 2011 or 2012. An option for consideration (from 2012 onwards) would be to hold the NJPB and Highland and Islands Fire Board Island meetings over the same two day period; this would reduce the travel required and allow travel costs to be reduced across the two Boards. However, this would not allow the Board to undertake local service familiarisation visits while on the Islands. Members are asked for their views and whether the Clerk should undertake further work on these options.

## **Conclusion**

11. In conclusion, it can be seen that there is some scope for the Board to review how it conducts its business in order to identify efficiencies. This would require changes to the scheduling of meetings, an increase in the use of technology to reduce travel costs and a review of staff support costs.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to:

- i. **Consider** the proposed actions to achieve reductions in the costs of NJPB;
- ii. **Agree** the proposed actions in paragraphs 6-11.

Signature

Designation Clerk

Date 25 January 2010

Author Clerk