

**Northern Joint Police Board
Finance and Policy Working Group**

Minutes of Meeting of the Finance and Policy Working Group held in Police Headquarters, Old Perth Road, Inverness on Monday, 16 November 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

Present:

Representing the Highland Council	Mr I Ross Mr G Smith Mr N Donald
Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Mr N M Macleod Mr I Mackenzie
Representing Orkney Islands Council	Mr A Drever
Representing Shetland Islands Council	Mr A Duncan

Officials in attendance:

Mr I Latimer, Chief Constable
Mrs E Ward, Force Director of Finance
Mrs M Grigor, Treasurer's Office
Mrs R Moir, Assistant Clerk
Mr S Taylor, Clerk's Office

Mr N M Macleod in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Millar, Mr H Wood and Mr B Murphy of the Highland Council, Mr A Cooper of Shetland Islands Council and Mr R Leslie of Orkney Islands Council.

2. Revenue Budget 2010/11

There had been circulated Report No. F&P3/09 dated 13 November 2009 by the Chief Constable updating Members on progress with the 2010/11 revenue budget.

In speaking to the report, the Chief Constable advised that discussions had been held between himself, the Convener and the Chief Executives and Directors of Finance of the four Constituent Authorities to discuss a way forward with regard to the 2010/2011 revenue budget settlement. The revenue budget for 2010/11 represented a £189k reduction in the budget level agreed for 2009/10 and a 3.7% (£2,281m) reduction against the indicative budget for 2010/11 originally presented to the Board in January 2009. The Chief Constable highlighted that the reduction in funding for 2010/11 would impact on the Force's ability to continue to deliver the current level of service.

The main proposals in an efficiency plan designed to achieve cash savings of 4% of the revenue budget had also been outlined in the discussions with the Constituent

Authorities. These included a commitment that Police Officer numbers would be fixed at 800 but an acknowledgment that a number of Support Staff posts would require to be removed, and reductions sought in training, travel and equipment purchases. Further details were set out in the reports circulated at this item and at item 3 below.

In response to questions, the Chief Constable advised that:

- the number of retiring officers had reduced
- there was no mechanism for Police Officers to be made redundant
- support staff redundancies would result in lower staff numbers than had been identified in the Force Review
- the cost of voluntary redundancies would be taken from the underspend for the current year 2009/10
- Northern Constabulary had the highest ratio of special constables in Scotland
- the Staff "Lightbulb" Suggestion Box scheme had so far identified £354,000 in potential savings
- the Force currently participated in a number of joint contracts in an effort to maximise cost efficiencies, and would actively explore further opportunities for collaborative procurement
- the extra cost of localised call systems had previously been justified by the greater local knowledge provided when compared to centralised models, however, it was recognised that this might not be sustainable in the future
- after the completion of Fort William and Glencoe, no further major station rebuilds were planned in the near future
- radio sites generating rental income would be retained.

The Working Group acknowledged that future budgets would be tight and, while concerned as to the potential ramifications, were generally supportive of the proposals, which took into consideration the current financial situation. During discussion it was stressed that the Scottish Government's funding mechanism for Police Officer pensions was outwith the Board's control.

After discussion, the Working Group, having recognised the constraints facing the Board due to the ongoing economic conditions and the need to support the proposals put forward in this context, **NOTED** the progress currently being made with regard to the building of the 2010/2011 budget, with a view to formal approval at the Board meeting on 29 January 2010.

3. Revenue Efficiency Plan 2010/11

There had been circulated Report No. F&P4/09 dated 13 November 2009 by the Chief Constable providing the Working Group with details of the steps to be taken to balance the revenue budget for 2010/2011.

The report presented an efficiency plan based upon achieving a 4% (£2.374m) saving against the 2009/10 budget. The targeted areas for savings were listed under:

- Direct/Indirect Employee Expenses
- Property Expenses
- Transport Expenses
- Supplies & Services Expenditure
- Income

In speaking to the report, the Force Director of Finance advised that the Force had established an Efficiency Scrutiny team at Director level, consisting of herself together with both Chief Superintendents and the Director of Human Resources, working alongside the Deputy Chief Constable. The team would monitor the targets, examine proposals and work with Divisional Commanders and Service Unit Managers to facilitate delivery of the Plan.

In response to a question, the Working Group was advised that officers seconded to outside bodies were funded by that body and not by Northern Constabulary.

Following discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the proposed Efficiency Scrutiny Plan for 2010/2011 and that further details would be reported to the Board.

The meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.