

NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

18 JANUARY 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2002 IMPLEMENTATION

Report by the Chief Constable

SUMMARY

To update Board Members on the implementation of the requirement of Freedom of Information (FOI) Legislation within Northern Constabulary.

BACKGROUND

Members will recall that a Report was submitted to the meeting of the Northern Joint Police Board in January 2007 which provided a breakdown of staff time involved in dealing with FOI requests, details of the nature of requests received and an indication of the costs involved in providing the information.

The purpose of this Report is to provide Board Members with a brief update on the current position for the past year in respect of requests received under FOI legislation.

Breakdown of Requests for Information

For the period 1 January to 31 December 2007, Northern Constabulary was asked a total of 1068 FOI questions which represents approximately an 8.75% increase over the period 1 January to 31 December 2006.

In terms of the source of requests, the breakdown for 2007 was as follows:-

Media	591 questions asked representing 55% of the total
MPs & MSPs	65 questions asked representing 6% of the total
Private Individuals	311 questions asked representing 29% of the total
Solicitors	9 questions asked representing 1% of the total
Business Sector/Public Bodies	100 questions asked representing 9% of the total

Costs

As indicated in the paper submitted to the Board in January 2007, the costs incurred by the Force in complying with the requirements of FOI legislation cannot be outlined in exact terms. This is because the Force does not have in place a system for formally measuring the amount of time which staff throughout the organisation spend in undertaking FOI related activities.

With the full year activity levels for 2007 now to hand, the initial expenditure estimate has been £135,000. This figure is broken down into two main elements as follows:-

£75,000 - Administration and salary costs

£60,000 - Time and effort involved by staff in Service Units and Area Commands on FOI related activities.

Staff

The Force Freedom of Information Officer (PC Duncan Pockett) is due to retire from the Force on the 9 January 2007, after completing his full service, which included over three years as the Freedom of Information Officer. The post has now been changed to a police staff post and Mrs Pamela Sherriff, who currently works within our Special Branch, has been appointed as the new Freedom of Information Co-ordinator. The Freedom of Information role will be moved into the new Force Information Management Unit on 1 April 2008.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board is invited to note the report.

I Latimer
Chief Constable

9 January 2008