

# NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

29 January 2010

Agenda Item	
Report No	

## Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 Update Report

### Report by the Chief Constable

#### **SUMMARY**

This Report updates Members of the Board on the ongoing business arising from the Force's administration of requests made for information under the Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation.

#### **Background**

Members may recall that a report was submitted to the meeting of the Northern Joint Police Board in January 2009 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**

During the period 1 January to 31 December 2009, Northern Constabulary was asked a total of 2061 FOI questions, which represents a **41.3% increase in demand over the same period in 2008**. Assessing against previous years, the current trend indicates this rate of increase will continue, with no sign of levelling off. This is contrary to the forecast expectation based on experience in other countries, that by this stage following initial implementation, the demand would have reached its peak and a known cost could be forecast on an annual basis. There is concern that additional funding will be required to support this business area in 2009-10, diverting resources away from operational policing.

Looking at the source of requests, the breakdown for 2008 was as follows:-

Media	1045 questions asked representing	51% of the total
MPs & MSPs	166 questions asked representing	8% of the total
Private Individuals	579 questions asked representing	28% of the total
Solicitors	15 questions asked representing	1% of the total
Business Sector/Public Bodies	178 questions asked representing	8% of the total
Other applicants	78 questions asked representing	4% of the total

## **Costs**

As indicated in the paper submitted to the Board in January 2008, 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 currently have in place a system for formally measuring the amount of time spent by staff throughout the organisation in undertaking activities as a direct consequence of FOI questions.

With the full year activity levels for 2009 now to hand, the estimate of expenditure is **£160,722**. This figure is broken down into two main elements as follows:-

### **Administration and salary costs:**

#### **£38,250 in total (estimate)**

Calculated as follows:

Civilian FOI Officer – full year annual salary, overtime and on costs of NI and Superannuation	£28,000
Civilian DP Officer	£4,000 (approx)
Senior Line Management - 5% of salary plus on cost of NI	£3,000 (approx)
Attendance at meetings and training	£1,000
Contribution to Central Referral Unit	£2,250

### **Service Unit contribution to FOI responses:**

#### **£122,472 in total**

Calculated as follows:

Time and effort involved by staff in Service Units and Area Commands on FOI related activities (based on an estimate of 4 hours input per request at £15 per hour).

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The Board is invited to note the content of this report.

**I Latimer**  
**Chief Constable**  
**18 January 2010**