

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

Minutes of Meeting of the Finance and Policy Working Group held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday, 1 May 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

Present:

Representing the Highland Council	Mr I Ross
	Mr G Smith
	Mr H Wood

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Mr N M Macleod
	Mr I Mackenzie

Representing Orkney Islands Council	Mr R Leslie
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Officials in attendance:

Mr I Latimer, Chief Constable
Mrs E Ward, Force Director of Finance
Mr D Robertson, Treasurer's Office
Ms M Morris, Clerk to the Board
Mrs R Moir, Assistant Clerk

Mr N M Macleod in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Cooper, Shetland Islands Council.

2. Scottish Police Services Authority

At its meeting held on 23 January 2009, the Board had noted that Mr Vic Emery, the new Convener of the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA), had tasked Mr Tom Nelson, SPSA Director of Forensic Services, to carry out a speedy review of the options for provision of forensic services in the North and East of Scotland, with particular reference to the future of the Grampian Police Forensic Science Laboratory, and to produce a multi-options paper for discussion with stakeholders, including the Board. The Board had agreed to invite Mr Nelson and his management colleagues to attend a meeting of this Working Group on completion of his options paper. This meeting of the Group had originally been called with a view to their attendance.

There had been circulated letter dated 3 April 2009 from Mr Emery to SPSA stakeholders advising that SPSA had decided to end the specific consultation on the options for the Grampian laboratory and concentrate instead on a "fresh engagement with customers across Scotland on a national service model for the whole of Forensic Services", to report later in the year. In light of this development, SPSA management had concluded that it would be more productive to postpone their meeting with Board Members until a later date, to take account of this new approach, and accordingly had confirmed their wish to decline the invitation to attend on 1 May and instead await a more suitable opportunity.

The Convener confirmed that an undertaking had been given that senior SPSA management officers would meet Board Members later in the year. The Chief Constable advised that he would be meeting Mr Emery later in the month and that it was hoped that a meeting with the Convener could also be arranged at that time.

In response to questions, the Chief Constable commented that some issues had still to be resolved concerning the delivery of ICT services, particularly in relation to maintenance of Northern Constabulary's legacy of bespoke ICT systems, as a number of experienced members of staff had left since the transfer of ICT services to the SPSA. Discussions would be held with the new SPSA senior management team on a range of issues, with a view to developing a constructive ongoing working relationship.

The Chief Constable also confirmed that the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) was pressing for the establishment of an SPSA Customer Services Board, as a mechanism for performance measurement and national accountability. The Convener advised that the Scottish Police Authorities Conveners Forum had raised this matter at a recent meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice.

After discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the position.

3. Best Value 2 Audit

There had been circulated joint letter dated 10 March 2009 from the Accounts Commission and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary to Chief Constables and Conveners of Police Boards setting out proposals for taking forward a programme of best value audits of police authorities and forces, on which comments had been invited by 10 April 2009. A list setting out the "characteristics of a Best Value Police Authority" appended to the letter included and further defined the following:

- vision and strategic direction
- partnership working and community leadership
- community engagement
- governance and accountability
- performance management and improvement
- use of resources.

There had also been circulated response letter dated 14 April 2009 from the Convener, acknowledging that the Northern Joint Police Board was to be the subject of one of the first two pilot audits referenced in paragraph 4.15 of the proposals document. It was understood that an audit of Tayside Joint Police Board would commence shortly, as the initial developmental pilot, with the audit of this Board expected to commence in late summer/early autumn 2009, with a view to refining the approach to be taken to the remaining police and also fire and rescue authority audits.

The Convener advised that these proposals had also been discussed at the Forum's meeting with the Cabinet Secretary. In relation to this Board's pilot status, he highlighted the additional workload this would impose on Board staff, who all had other work responsibilities in addition to the servicing of this Board. He also pointed out that other factors, such as increased legislative burdens, had in recent years placed additional demands on Board staff, and it was possible that consideration would have to be given in the medium to longer-term to increasing the staffing resource available to the Board. In the short-term, adequate resources would be needed during preparation for the forthcoming audit and also while it was being carried out.

The Chief Constable highlighted the likely focus on evidencing the Board's governance role. He drew attention to the Constabulary's regular experience of the

audit and inspection process and suggested that the Force could offer support to the Board to supplement its staffing resources in the short term. The Clerk confirmed that she was in touch with Audit Scotland with a view to getting early information on what would be required. She indicated her understanding that the audit would take a risk-based approach, with an initial self-assessment to be carried out to identify areas of actual or potential weakness. She anticipated that Audit Scotland would wish to attend Board/Working Group meetings and engage with Members. A report would be made to the Board's next meeting to make Members aware of what was proposed. Further meetings of the Working Group or perhaps a special meeting of the Board might be required. Appropriate briefings for Board Members would be considered.

During discussion, it was suggested that the audit should be seen as a developmental opportunity and that the Board's pilot status could have positive advantages if it allowed the Board to influence the audit process, so that it gave greater recognition to the differing characteristics and priorities of different authorities, rather than perhaps adopting a "one size fits all" approach. The Convener advised that Audit Scotland had indicated to the Conveners Forum that recognition would be given to such variations.

After discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the position and that more detailed information would be brought to the Board and **AGREED** to recommend that the Board homologate the consultation response sent by the Convener.

4. Independent Review of Policing

At its meeting held on 3 October 2008, the Working Group had agreed the terms of a Board response to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland's (HMCICS) Independent Review of Policing, including a request for an early meeting with HMCICS to discuss concerns relating to the consultation process. At its meeting held on 14 November 2008, the Board had noted that, as HMCICS had been unable to accept the Board's invitation to attend then, the Convener had written to invite him to attend a meeting of either the Board or the Finance and Policy Working Group once the outcome of the Review of Policing in Scotland was available in draft form.

There had been circulated for information Executive Summary of the HMCICS Report on his Review, published on 23 January 2009, no prior draft having first been available. There had also been circulated letter dated 22 April 2009 from the Convener to the Cabinet Secretary, following consultation with the Chief Constable, offering initial comments on the Report.

The Convener confirmed that this issue had also been included in Forum discussions with the Cabinet Secretary and with civil servants. Further dialogue on the Review's various recommendations was anticipated, with a report to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament in June. The Chief Constable highlighted the Cabinet Secretary's comments to a recent Scottish Police Federation conference that he had no plans to reduce the number of police forces in Scotland. However, he also warned that any reduction in financial support for Northern Constabulary in the current economic and political climate would threaten his aspiration to increase the number of uniformed officers to some 815 by the end of the financial year and to at least maintain the number of officers at this level in subsequent years.

After discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the position and **AGREED** to recommend that the Board homologate the comments sent to the Cabinet Secretary.

The meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.