

NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

28 August 2009

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Variable Shift Arrangement

Report by the Chief Constable

SUMMARY

This Report provides Members with a six monthly review of the Variable Shift Arrangement.

Background

Following the launch of VSA 99 in January 2009, a presentation was made to the Board at its January meeting on the Variable Shift Arrangement, looking at the considerations which were made prior to it being chosen and outlining the associated benefits it would make to both staff and the organisation.

At this time the Board asked for a review to be undertaken, updating the members on how the new shift system was working.

Update

The organisational benefits which were highlighted in the presentation in January were as follows:

1. Significantly improve work/life balance of staff

Update

Staff have reported that the new shift system has made a significant improvement to them in this respect. The reduction in the number of shifts being worked in a row, coupled with additional rest days, in particular those following a night shift, appear to be very beneficial. Managers highlight good staff morale. It is also encouraging to see a slight reduction in the sickness/absence figures when comparing figures for April/May 2008 with this year's figures for the same period.

2. Enhanced Operational Flexibility

3. Closer Demand/Supply Match

4. Greater Police Presence and Availability at Peak Times

Update

The VSA lends itself extremely well to accommodating these three business benefits. Having the shifts structured to provide large crossover periods at times of peak demand and the ability to vary shifts according to operational requirements gives managers a greater degree of operational flexibility. Managers report using the crossovers to carry out warrants initiatives, pro-active patrols on foot, cycles and vehicles and allowing the officers the opportunity of writing time for submission of reports.

5. Opportunity for Efficiency Savings

Update

Overtime is still incurred but this is predominantly due to officers' attendance at courts and not incurred supplementing shifts at peak periods.

6. Availability of Corporate Rest Day Cycle to Enhance Operational Capabilities for Policing Events or Abnormality

Update

We are now well and truly into the Summer Festival Period, and have already been involved in the planning for and policing of large scale music festivals, agricultural shows, Royal visits etc. VSA has proven a valuable asset. There is no longer a requirement to secure Work Force Agreements to vary shift lengths of the officers involved in policing certain events. Planning is made easier, given the pool of operational officers available to you from all divisions are on the corporate rest day cycle.

In conclusion, VSA has had a positive effect on the officers working it, however complacency is not an option and it is not the shift system but the people who manage the shift system that will ultimately determine its future success.

It should also be noted that, since the meeting in January, officers stationed on Shetland's main island are now also working VSA99.

A twelve monthly review of the VSA will also be undertaken and can be made available to Board members, should it be required.

RECOMMENDATION

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

**I Latimer
Chief Constable
3 August 2009**