

NORTHERN JOINT POLICE BOARD

FINANCE AND POLICYWORKING GROUP/COMPLAINTS STUDY GROUP

Minutes of Meeting of the Finance and Policy Working Group/Complaints Study Group held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday, 5 March 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Representing the Highland Council

Mrs J N Home (items 1-3 only)
Mr G M Smith
Mr W J Ross
Mr E Mackinnon
Mr A S Park

Representing Western Isles Council

Mr D MacLean

Representing Shetland Islands Council

Mr J Nicolson

Officials in attendance:

Deputy Chief Constable
Inspector A MacLean
Mrs R Moir, Assistant Clerk
Mrs C Nicoll, Clerk's Office

Finance and Policy Working Group

Mrs J N Home in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Laing, Mrs C Cumming, Mr B M S Dunlop and Mrs O J Macdonald, The Highland Council, Mr R C Sclater, Orkney Islands Council and Mr N M Macleod, Western Isles Council.

2. Pre-Election Briefing Paper

At its meeting held on 25 August 2006, the Board had agreed to take a more proactive role in raising awareness of the quality of police services provided by Northern Constabulary. At its meeting held on 19 January 2007, the Board had agreed that the Clerk co-ordinate preparation of a briefing paper reflecting the views of the Board, the draft to be submitted to this Working Group and then circulated to all Members for comment, prior to publication to candidate MSPs and such other parties as the Board might agree.

There had been circulated for comment draft briefing paper and draft covering letter from the Convener to prospective MSPs. Members had been given an opportunity to comment by email. A further amended draft briefing paper was tabled.

The Working Group **AGREED** that the tabled draft be circulated to all Board Members for any further comment, subject to inclusion of further reference to the remote and dispersed character of much of the Board's area.

3. Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) – Staff Transfer Orders

The draft briefing paper circulated at item 2 above made reference to the transfer of certain staff to the SPSA with effect from 1 April 2007. In this context, Members were advised that the Board was required, no later than 23 March 2007, to make appropriate Staff Transfer Orders in accordance with the terms of the Scottish Police Services Authority (Staff Transfer) Order 2007, and to pass the relevant information to the Scottish Executive.

The Working Group **AGREED** to recommend that the Clerk fulfil these requirements, and that her actions in this regard be homologated by the Board at its meeting on 30 March 2007.

Complaints Study Group

Mr D MacLean in the Chair

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meetings of the Complaints Study Group held on 18 August 2006, previously circulated to the meeting of the Northern Joint Police Board held on 25 August 2006.

5. Complaints Against the Police Correspondence from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC)

In the Thematic Inspection on Complaints (A Fair Cop), published in April 2000, HMIC had indicated that there would be value in passing correspondence with dissatisfied complainers for the information of the Northern Joint Police Board.

There had been circulated copy letters submitted by HMIC to the Clerk in relation to two complaints referred to HMIC, together with Report No CSG1/07 by the Deputy Chief Constable on the handling by the Constabulary of one of these complaints. Report No CSG3/07, in relation to the Constabulary's handling of the other complaint, was tabled, the HMIC letter in question having been received too late for the Deputy Chief Constable's report on it to be circulated in advance of the meeting. The Deputy Chief Constable advised that, in this latter case, he would be writing to HMIC concerning some of the issues raised, to ensure accuracy and clarity of understanding.

Having considered each of the complaints in turn, the Group **NOTED** the letters from HMIC and the reports from the Deputy Chief Constable and **AGREED** that no further action required to be undertaken in either case.

6. Northern Constabulary – Investigation of Complaints: Current Position

There had been circulated Report No CSG2/07 by the Deputy Chief Constable on the current position on the investigation of complaints by the Professional Standards and Conduct Department, providing Members with a breakdown of the number of types of complaints against the Police received by the Force and comparing the level of complaints received for each Area Command for the periods 1 April to 31 December 2005 and 1 April to 31 December 2006.

In speaking to the report, Chief Inspector A MacLean outlined a number of improvements which the Force would be implementing to the complaints procedure and explained that work was ongoing to develop a process for monitoring the compliance with various Force policies and procedures. In conclusion, Chief Inspector MacLean reported that, in a number of Area Commands, the volume of complaints received between the period 1 April 2006 and 31 December 2006 had decreased by approximately 10% when compared with the same period in 2005.

The Group **NOTED** the position.

7. National Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CGS3/07 by the Deputy Chief Constable providing Members with an update on current and developing national issues in relation to complaints against the Police.

The Deputy Chief Constable outlined the work ongoing in relation to Conduct Regulations and Substance Misuse and reminded Members that, from 1 April 2007, the Police Complaints Commissioner for Scotland would be responsible for reviewing complaints against the Police. Regulations clarifying details of the Commissioner's remit and procedures had not yet, however, been put in place. In particular, it had yet to be confirmed whether or not the Commissioner would be given a remit to re-open and review cases previously raised with HMIC. There was also concern as to how the financial costs of investigations carried out by individual Forces on behalf of the PCCS would be met and how information on the new procedures would be publicised.

The Group **NOTED** the position.

Prior to the closure of the meeting the Vice-Convener expressed his thanks to both Members and officials for their work and support during the term of the current Board.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.