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**NORTHERN CONSTABULARY
POLICY FORUM**

MINUTES

DATE: 29 November 2010
LOCATION: Conference Room, Police Headquarters, Inverness
CHAIR: Mr. I. Latimer, Chief Constable
SECRETARY: Mrs. A. Dow, Committee Services

PRESENT:

Mr. A. G. Sutherland	Deputy Chief Constable
Chief Superintendent A. Cowie	Head of Support Services
Chief Superintendent B. Duncan	Head of Operations
A/Detective Superintendent K. Anderson	Crime Services
Superintendent I. Arnott	East Division
A/Superintendent I. Bryce	Corporate Services
Superintendent J. Darcy	Professional Standards
Superintendent J. Innes	North Division
Superintendent S. MacKay	Best Value Review of Shared Services
Superintendent J. McDonald	Central Division
Chief Inspector D. Bushell	North Division (Shetland)
Chief Inspector C. Souter	Operational Support
Ms. A. Sillars	Director of Human Resources
Mrs. V. MacDonald	Finance and Asset Management
Constable D. Ross	Joint Branch Board

PRESENT BY VIDEO CONFERENCING:

Chief Inspector G. MacLeod Central Division (Western Isles)

APOLOGIES:

Chief Inspector M. Grant North Division (Orkney)
Mr. F. Winston UNISON

1. **WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He commented that, in view of the short formal Agenda, the meeting was an opportunity for the Forum to discuss a number of the significant challenges facing the Force at this time. He advised that no Core Brief had been circulated. However, an Executive Outlook for immediate issue was being prepared which would capture the issues on which he was to comment during the meeting.

2. **INTERIM SCOTTISH POLICING BOARD SUSTAINABLE POLICING SUB-GROUP REPORT ("the Report")**

The Chairman advised that the Report had been received in-Force near to the close of business on Thursday, 25 November 2010 with a request for a response by Friday, 26 November 2010. It had also been sent to the Convener of the Northern Joint Police Board ("the Board") within the same timescale. A meeting of the Sub-Group, chaired by a senior Civil Servant, was to be held today to consider all responses, and thereafter the Scottish Policing Board was to debate the recommendations of the Sub-Group when it met on 6 December 2010. It was his understanding that a final paper was to be presented to the Scottish Policing Board in March 2011 and if the recommendations were endorsed these would then be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for approval for implementation from April 2013.

The Chairman advised the Forum that the Report was heavily weighted towards recommending a "single force" for Scotland with a merger of forces on existing boundaries. Of concern was the fact that it did not contain supporting evidence or costings which would demonstrate the value of this recommendation. He went on to outline the implications for Northern Constabulary if the "single force" proposal was accepted. He reiterated his position that for the benefit of the communities which the Force served, he was supportive of either the status quo or alternatively that Northern Constabulary remain at the centre of policing in the Highlands and Islands, potentially as a larger force, taking in some of the bordering remote and rural areas which had similar policing styles to the Force.

A lengthy discussion followed during which the Chairman shared his views with the Forum on the issue, took comment from those present and responded where appropriate.

At the conclusion, the Chairman encouraged those present to take a considered position and utilise whatever platform was available to them to communicate that position without delay. He acknowledged that Staff Associations would require to arrive at their own views but he suggested that a local concerted position would be advantageous if a national one was not possible. In light of the timetable which he had outlined earlier in the discussion, it was his view that urgent action was desirable.

3. **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT BUDGET FOR 2011/2012 AND BOARD MEETING – 26 NOVEMBER 2010**

The Chairman advised that the implications of the Scottish national budget

announced by Mr. Swinney on 17 November 2010 were now being interpreted at a local level and would influence decisions to be made by the Board. The Scottish Government had proposed to COSLA that if the police service was to be considered as part of the Local Authority "family" and asked to make a 2.6% saving, there had to be a commitment on the part of Local Authorities to retain the 1,000 police officers which had been previously nationally funded by the Government. When inflation was taken into account, this would equate to 6% savings to be achieved. For Northern Constabulary this would mean maintaining during 2011/2012 an establishment of 707 officers plus 54 (of the 1,000) i.e. 761 with the current establishment at 793 without inclusion of those officers either on secondment or a career break. There would likely be no recruitment of officers during 2011/2012, with the exception of the seven cadets. The Chairman explained that the Force's budget was impacted by inflation for non-staff costs e.g. procurement, fuel costs. In addition, although cost of living salary increases had been frozen, annual increments were still to be paid.

The Chairman reminded the Forum that only a one year budget profile had been produced, although there was pressure in Parliament for the production of a further three year budget profile as had first been proposed. Therefore it was possible that, although the cost savings for 2011/2012 had been lower than at first anticipated, the 2012/2013 savings to be achieved might be higher. Other possible issues which might impact on the 2011/2012 budget were:

- it was possible that an emergency budget might be issued after the Scottish elections in May 2011 with implications for the police service
- the reduction in the policing central grant which, amongst other implications, would mean the cessation of funding by the Government of the seven officers, with £200,000 additional funding therefore to be found by the Force.

The Chairman advised that the Board had:

- accepted the Force's recommendations for the implementation of the Best Value Review recommendations in respect of call management and the need for a reduction in reception hours at police stations; with respect to the latter, it had been agreed in principle that 24-hour reception would be retained in Lerwick and Stornoway with options for funding the extended cover to be explored
- acknowledged the necessity for station closures but deferred a decision to its 28 January 2011 meeting and, in particular, asked for further information in respect of the proposal to close the Beaulieu Police Station; the budget to be proposed to the Board at its 28 January 2011 meeting would be predicated on the assumption that the 15 stations other than Beaulieu would be closed
- agreed the Voluntary Redundancy programme in principle with authority being delegated to the Chief Constable and the Clerk to the Board to progress; the programme was to be funded by the £1m underspend for 2010/2011 which would ensure that there was no impact on the 2011/2012 revenue budget; with the exception of a small number of part-time domestic staff in stations which were to close, it was hoped to avoid the necessity for other compulsory redundancies; he emphasised that, in order to achieve the necessary savings, it was essential that the posts vacated would not be filled.

In conclusion, the Chairman advised that a balanced budget would be finalised over

the coming weeks for presentation to the Board at its 28 January 2011 meeting. He confirmed that he would be advising the Board that:

- in view of the link between funding and police officer numbers, the early retirement of police officers at or over 30 years' service through Regulation A19 should not be implemented in order to maintain the establishment above the 761 officers to which he had earlier referred; however, he acknowledged that savings would therefore have to be found in other areas of the budget
- caution be exercised by the Board regarding the use of reserves during 2011/2012 as these might be required if larger savings were necessary for the 2012/2013 financial year; the use of reserves for 2011/2012 would be limited, he anticipated, to a balancing figure to fund a minimal deficit if this became necessary; if the proposal for a single force for Scotland was to be approved, the Board might wish to discuss at that stage the use of remaining reserves.

He expressed his view that the 2011/2012 budget could be delivered but would be challenging.

In response to a question from Chief Superintendent Duncan, it was confirmed that Service Level Agreements/Service Unit Plans and Divisional Policing Plans should continue to be developed in the meantime on the basis of a 6% savings to be achieved.

The Chairman concluded by commending the work carried out by the Best Value Review Team.

4. **MINUTES**

(A) Policy Forum

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2010, having been circulated, were approved.

(B) Management Service Group – 28 September 2010 Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2010, informed by Chief Superintendent Cowie's Summary of Policy Implications, were noted.

(C) Operations Service Group – 17 November 2010 Meeting

Chief Superintendent Duncan reviewed the Summary of Policy Implications highlighting in particular the Force Reference Documents section as follows:

- Missing Persons – Amendment
- Fires – Amendment
- Adults in Need of Support and Protection – New
- Threat to Life – Insertion in the Crime Management Handbook
- Fleet Management – Amendment
- Management of Occupational Road Risk Manual – New.

He commended the members of the Working Group who had developed the amended Fleet Management Force Reference Document and the new Management of Occupational Road Risk Manual for the work which they had undertaken.

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2010, having been circulated, were noted.

(D) Capital and Project Monitoring Group – 18 October 2010 Meeting

The Deputy Chief Constable advised that no recommendations were to be brought to the meeting for approval on this occasion. He highlighted that the proposal to replace hand-held terminals and printers used by Traffic Wardens in Inverness had not been approved in view of the current budgetary position. He invited those present to note the Information Technology Update at Section 6 in particular.

Superintendent McDonald confirmed it was anticipated that the Glencoe project was to be completed before Christmas, although perhaps not occupied at that stage.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2010, having been circulated, were noted.

5. OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS ("OPRs") - OPERATIONS

A. Divisional OPRs

Chief Superintendent Duncan highlighted and commented on the following information contained in the Divisional Reports:

North Division

- strong performance – detection rate up 6% to 65.1%
- good drugs work across the Division, especially in Shetland
- the focus on licensing matters resulting in reduction in incidents of violence and incidents involving alcohol
- Police Dependants' Trust Open Day at Wick Police Station on 18 September 2010
- operational priorities for the next four months noted.

He advised of new procedures introduced in North Division with respect to the review of incidents. Each Class 1, 2 and 5 crime was reviewed but in particular, Class 3 and 4 incidents were reviewed daily by the Researcher. If there was a potential detection, the incident was taken to Tactical Tasking and if not it was written off and filed at an early stage. The results were:

- focus brought to detections
- officers were motivated and encouraged in the detection of crime
- more discretion was being given to officers
- officers' workloads were reducing.

He proposed that this model be introduced to other Divisions.

Superintendent Innes commended the work of his officers which had led to the positive results which had been achieved.

Central Division

- good detection rates
- plans in place to increase pro-activity
- new initiative of Community Action Officers – return to Problem Solving Policing
- Chief Constable Commendations to PCs M. Gallie and M. McMaster, serving in Barra, were noted
- similar operational priorities to other Divisions noted.

East Division

- detection rate was down to 58.3%; the possible impact of recent SPR8 changes was being investigated
- crime had reduced by 301 crimes in addition to a fall last year which was commendable
- had been a very busy period with events and the detection of serious organised crime
- expectation that the detection rate would rise in next four to five months
- planning for events like Rockness already underway
- a number of key personnel had retired and the Force wished them well
- similar operational priorities to other Divisions noted.

The Chairman commented that the loss of experienced officers to retiral in East Division had been noted and he assured Superintendent Arnott that replacement officers would shortly be put in place.

B. Operational Support Services and Crime Services

Operational Support Services

- the number of road casualties was currently lower than last year's figures although there had been a number of fatalities recently; no trend in causes could be identified
- "Stay Safe" advice for officers and police staff in relation to terrorism had been issued to Divisions and Service Units to be viewed by relevant staff; the target date for completion was 30 November 2010 and Chief Superintendent Duncan encouraged all Divisional Commanders/Service Unit Managers to ensure that the Force was as close to 100% delivery as was possible, recognising that there would be always be personnel unavailable through, for example, long term absence
- the Major Incident Exercise to be held on 1 March 2011 to test multi-agency response to adverse weather was noted.

Crime Services

Noted were:

- the significant number of major crime investigations progressed on behalf of Divisions; Chief Superintendent Duncan commented that the work of Crime Services was often not evident and he gave an example of a major drugs case suspect who had had to be stopped in Lothian and Borders Force area with prosecution being led by the Metropolitan Police, but a great deal of the investigative work had been carried out by the Force
- in addition to the investigative work being carried out by Crime Services, policy issues had been taken forward with a re-write of the Crime Management Handbook, the Domestic Abuse and the Adults in Need of Support Force Reference Documents and work completed to advise Divisions on the implementation of the new Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009, to come into force on 1 December 2010.

The Chairman highlighted one result under Operation Asteroid which had resulted in the confiscation of assets and referred to another case which had involved overseas investigation.

A/Detective Superintendent Anderson thanked the Force Executive, Divisions and Operational Support for the support given to Crime Services which had enabled the Unit to achieve the positive outcomes which had been reported in the OPR.

6. OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS ("OPRs") – SUPPORT SERVICES

Chief Superintendent Cowie reviewed the Support Services' OPRs as follows:

Corporate Services

Noted were:

- progress was being made with the FIMU Restructuring Project; backlogs were being reduced through multi-skilling and omni-competence and the recruitment of six new Information Support Officers in August 2010; in the area of performance management, a new performance pack had been developed which would enable the Force to provide more detailed and meaningful statistics in respect of areas of work on which the Force reports
- the HMICS "Self-Evaluation: National Progress Draft Report" published in November 2010 had commented that Northern Constabulary was the only force in Scotland which had embedded EFQM as an effective corporate management tool
- Ms. Buchanan had been granted a "Commended Award" from the Scottish Policing Awards for her initiative in organising a Trans-inclusive policing event involving a number of stakeholders
- the Force's Consolidated Action Plan had been reduced from 300 to 40 actions through sustained hard work; this was commended by the Chairman
- the Force was not hitting national targets in the answering of "999" calls; the Deputy Chief Constable explained that the Force Executive had taken a discretionary decision in this matter and were not willing to commit the significant level of resources which would be required to improve the Force's performance from 13 secs to 10 secs to meet the national target; the Chairman confirmed his view that the target was artificial and he preferred to allocate sufficient resources to respond operationally to the calls in preference to deploying resources to meet the target; A/Superintendent Bryce advised that a study had been carried out in April 2010 which had evidenced that only 25% of 999 calls had, in fact, been emergencies and therefore work was on-going with ICAD to investigate this issue.

Corporate Communications

Noted were:

- the effective use of social media as a means of communication with the public in respect of both routine and critical incidents; the official launch to be held on Wednesday, 1 December 2010, at Headquarters of the Force's Facebook and Twitter services was noted
- the importance being placed by Corporate Communications on public reassurance was commended; the use of the BVSS Communications Strategy and the Force website to communicate with the public on the Force Restructuring was noted, together with the positive outcomes.

The Chairman commended the "Northern Light" publication as a vehicle to demonstrate effective communication both with Northern Constabulary staff and the communities which the Force served.

Best Value Review of Shared Services

It was agreed that Superintendent MacKay's report had already been covered by the Chairman earlier in the meeting. Superintendent MacKay thanked all who had supported the work of the Best Value Review Team.

Professional Standards and Conduct

Chief Superintendent Cowie highlighted:

- the Local Resolution Process Pilot Project currently underway in North Division; evaluation was to take place at its conclusion on 31 December 2010 with a view to a roll-out of the process across the Force
- the work being undertaken by Mr. J. MacDonald, Enquiry Officer, to attend informal meetings of officers and staff at Divisional level to discuss matters of concern in relation to professional standards
- work on-going with the Board to develop improved reporting on complaints by more detailed analysis which would also better inform Divisional Commanders/Service Unit Managers.

Superintendent Darcy:

- stated that it had to be borne in mind that those members of the public who made complaints and the officers against whom complaints were made were in the minority
- highlighted that there had been a 53% rise in last year's workload for his Unit.
- commented on the work of the PCCS.

7. OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS – HUMAN RESOURCES

Ms. Sillars:

- pointed out that sickness absence data was not contained in her 2nd Quarter People Management Corporate Statistical Report because of problems with SCoPE of which attendees were already aware
- advised that the Force had been successful in retaining the liP Award; the Deputy Chief Constable reminded the Forum that the value of the Award was not solely in gaining external recognition but lay in the improvement to practices and processes within the Force and he commended those who had contributed to the work necessary to achieve this success
- advised that technical issues had arisen between the chosen provider of the Employee Assistance Programme and Highland Council which had yet to be resolved; therefore the Programme would not now be in place by 1 January 2011 as had been anticipated

- informed the meeting that the QSA Health and Safety Audit had recently been undertaken with a successful outcome for the Force in that its score had increased from the last audit and, in fact, Northern Constabulary was the force with the highest increase in Scotland; the Deputy Chief Constable thanked the Safety Committee chaired by Chief Superintendent Duncan, the Health and Safety Adviser and those members of the Joint Branch Board who had carried out local health and safety inspections for their respective contributions to this successful outcome
- advised it was anticipated that all issues relating to the Voluntary Redundancy Programme would be resolved by Christmas.

8. **OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS – FINANCE and ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Mrs. MacDonald advised that the work of the Unit was presently centred on budget preparation for 2011/2012 and capturing costs for the police objective analysis.

9. There being no further business, the meeting concluded.