

Devon and Cornwall Police Authority HR Committee

11 June 2008

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Report of Chris Haselden, Director of Human Resources

Proposed Voluntary Severance Terms for Police Staff

Recommendation:

The Committee to note the current position on the establishment of a voluntary severance scheme for police staff and consider any further action required at this time.

Introduction/Summary

At the meeting on 9 May 2007, the Human Resources Committee agreed the principles of a voluntary severance scheme for police staff. Further action was to be undertaken for putting the scheme into place. An update on the position was to be provided to the Committee after 12 months.

The current round of organisational changes as part of the achievement of the Constabulary becoming a top ten performing force does require changes to some police staff positions. It is intended that all existing police staff will be able to remain with the force. For some police staff this will require being redeployed to a different position. To facilitate this, the redeployment policy is being revised to bring it wholly up to date. It is prudent also at this time to update the redundancy policy.

As set out in a Partnership Agreement, where all redeployment opportunities have been exhausted, voluntary severance would be offered in advance of compulsory redundancies. This provision is being included in the revision of the redeployment and redundancy policies.

Consultation with the trades unions on these revised policies is nearing conclusion. Once revised policies have been agreed with the trades unions, the revised policies will appropriately be referred to the Police Authority.

Background Information

In considering the medium term financial challenges faced by the force when the original report was presented to the Human Resources Committee on 9 May 2007, it was recognised that the number of police staff positions in some areas might have needed to be reduced, with the possibility of redundancies. It was considered prudent to have a clear policy in this area.

A negotiated Partnership Agreement explicitly states that "every possible effort will be made to ensure that (compulsory) redundancy is a very last resort and is avoided through the use of redeployment, retraining, re-skilling, resource management and voluntary severance/early retirement". Accordingly preparations were made to establish a voluntary severance scheme for police staff.

The principles of a voluntary severance scheme for police staff were agreed at the meeting of the Human Resources Committee on 9 May 2007. The associated risks of implementing a voluntary severance scheme were listed and recognised. With the easing of the likelihood of redundancies at that time, the subsequent activity was not immediately pursued in favour of other priorities.

The current round of organisational changes as part of the achievement of the Constabulary becoming a top ten performing force requires a reassignment of a large number of police staff posts. Reductions need to be made in some areas whilst new, different police staff posts are being created in other areas,

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including the civilianisation of police officer posts. Appropriate arrangements need to be in place for the staff currently assigned to the posts subject to dis-establishment. It is again necessary therefore to have comprehensive redundancy and redeployment policies in place including the provision for voluntary severance should this be appropriate.

The key features of a voluntary severance scheme for police staff described in the previous report included:

- The overriding need is to retain sufficient staff with the right skills to meet current and future needs
- The expectations of staff need to be managed where opportunities exist for redeployment
- Voluntary severance would not be an entitlement for staff; the force would reserve the absolute right to refuse or defer requests
- A Panel comprising, as a minimum, a senior representative of HR and from the department concerned would consider requests for voluntary severance
- An appeal process would be established
- Individuals would be required to sign a legally binding compromise agreement
- Voluntary severance terms would be based on the same terms as compulsory redundancy

Revisions to the existing redundancy and redeployment policies have recently been drafted and consultation with the trades unions on these is nearing conclusion. The previously approved principles for a voluntary severance scheme are being included in these discussions. Once revised policies have been agreed with the trades unions formally through the Joint Negotiating and Joint Consultative Committee, the revised policies will appropriately be referred to the Police Authority.

Contact for more information

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