

DEVON AND CORNWALL POLICE AUTHORITY

A meeting of the Resources Committee was held on 24 March 2004.

Further information on the items referred to below is contained in the agenda for this meeting, which has been circulated to all members.

The following recommendation arose from the meeting:

R/332 PAYMENT OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

Devon County Council's payroll department currently undertook the payment of Members' allowances and expenses with payments being made at the end of each month. The proposal was for Members' allowances to be brought in line with staff salary payments which were paid on or around the 15th of each month. This would result in a reduction of administration.

The anticipated changes for Members were that a slightly modified claim form for expenses would need to be produced and completed forms would need to be received by the payroll department by the middle of the month for payment in the following month.

It was suggested that, if approved, the changes be implemented in June 2004 to coincide with the annual uprating of the allowance.

Members expressed a concern that the distinction between an allowance and a salary should not be compromised. Members were paid an allowance to support them in their role and as such, they did not benefit from the variety of fringe benefits that salaried employees were entitled to. It was suggested that the Members' appraisal system, which was currently being developed, would go some way towards maintaining this distinction.

It was agreed that there was a need to gain approval from all Members before the proposals were progressed.

RECOMMENDATION that

- i. the proposals to change the date for payment of members' allowances and reimbursement of members' expenses be approved;
- ii. the appropriate administrative procedures, as outlined in the report, be implemented to support recommendation (i).

Other matters discussed included: -

R/330 ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING PROCESS

Environmental scanning was a process carried out by the Strategic Analysis and Corporate Planning section of the Strategic Development Department as a service to the organisation as a whole and involved daily scans of a variety of sources to identify local issues that may impact on policing in the future.

It was recognised that whilst some environmental factors may be of strategic relevance to the Police Force, there may be other factors of strategic relevance to the Police Authority that may not be included in the Force environmental scan. The example given was in the political arena. Additionally, there may be issues that Members were aware of as representatives of their communities that could usefully be included. The possibility of linking in information that would be of relevance to the Police Authority and finding a way of recognising what may be of importance to both parties was considered. Different approaches were suggested however it was decided that nominated Officers of the Authority would look to develop a system of communicating information to the Force.

R/331 FINANCIAL MONITORING

Mr Papworth reported that pressure on the major operations budget was considerable because of the recent atypical high number of such operations running at the same time. The budget monitoring report presented predated the recent operation in North Devon (which was expected to cost £200,000 by the end of March), and the Okehampton investigation. As a consequence of this, the recent resource management arrangements for major operations put in place following the spate of murders in late 2003 had needed to be revised.

Pressures on the 2004-05 major operations budget were already being experienced, with £150,000 of the £200,000 forecast to be spent on the North Devon investigation being charged to it and the continuing costs from the remaining ongoing major investigations. A complete review of all major inquiries was planned to ensure they were being financed efficiently.

Members were made aware of the increasing costs of forensic and similar investigatory practices, which added to pressures on the budget. It was acknowledged that this aspect of policing should be considered as a prime cost driver alongside additional police officers.

A paper providing information on the increased costs of investigating crimes would be prepared for a future meeting of the committee.

It was confirmed that the partnership fund (line 15) had been devolved to BCUs and was fully committed.

The budget had been agreed based on savings of £5m. The financial monitoring reports during 2004-05 would include details of where these savings were being made.

R/334 REVIEW OF ICT NEW SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATIONS 2003-04

Members received a report which updated them on the implementation of new information and communication technology projects delivered in 2003/-4. In particular, Members' attention was drawn to:-

- a) the infrastructure projects which included the data network upgrade, implementation of Software Integrated Command and Communication Software (SICCS) and new digital telephone 'Meridian' switches,
- b) the introduction of the 'Mobex' mobile phone facility which had significant cost saving implications, and
- c) new applications, for example Holmes II 'thin client', which had greatly assisted the management of the recent major operations.

R/333 BUDGET

There was a need for the Authority to approve the budget in a format which complied with the Best Value Code of Practice.

R/336 UPDATE ON FM CONTRACT

Members received an update on the FM Contract extension for ICT Services.

R/338 INSURANCE RENEWALS

The Treasurer has been given delegated power to take a decision on the officials' indemnity in consultation with the Chairman of the Resources Committee.

**Mr Brian Greenslade
Chairman, Resources Committee**