

RURAL POLICING (TRAVELLING) POLICY

Joint Report of the Chief Constable, Treasurer and Personnel Adviser

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to request members to approve a rural policing policy applicable to North and South West Northumberland Area Commands, designed to address personnel and deployment issues that are peculiar to these two rural area commands.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 In recent years, the Force has experienced increasing difficulty in resourcing the rural area commands of North Northumberland and South West Northumberland.

2.2 Whilst the Chief Constable can require an officer to work anywhere in the Force area, the majority of officers live in the urban conurbation of Tyne & Wear making travel to the north-most and west-most areas of the Force unattractive in terms of time, cost and distance.

2.3 Long term solutions through local recruitment initiatives have been unsuccessful and retaining officers within these areas has also caused difficulties. The net result is higher vacancy levels within North Northumberland and South West Northumberland Area Commands, compared with all other areas of the Force.

2.4 South West Northumberland

South West Northumberland is a large rural Area Command which covers a 900 square mile area, extending to the Scottish, Cumbrian and Durham borders. To adequately police this area, South West Northumberland has 5 stations at Hexham, Corbridge, Prudhoe, Haltwhistle and Bellingham.

2.5 Few officers choose to reside in the north and west of the Area Command due to its remoteness. Many officers posted there out of operational necessity are resistant to the move, due to travelling costs, and quickly seek to transfer back to one of the more central stations.

2.6 North Northumberland

Historically, North Northumberland has suffered similar problems to those currently experienced in South West Northumberland. This resulted in a Deployment Policy in respect of North Northumberland being agreed by the Police Authority at its meeting of 23 June 1999 (minute 69 (ii) 1999/2000).

2.7 This Deployment Policy allowed for the payment of travelling and removal expenses for officers deployed within North Northumberland Area Command. These financial measures were designed to offset any inordinate expense incurred by officers travelling to, or moving

house into, North Northumberland, and alternatively, for officers resident in the area command seeking to develop their careers elsewhere within the Force.

2.8 The Police Authority therefore agreed the following proposals:

- The payment of excess mileage for all miles travelled between home and work, which were in excess of 20 each way. The excess mileage would be compensated at the 'Northumbria Police Mileage Rate' and would be taxable.
- Officers who had resided and worked within North Northumberland for more than 3 years, were also eligible to claim the same excess mileage payment if they obtained redeployment within another Area Command. This payment would be made for 52 weeks.
- Officers who wished to relocate into the area would receive a removal expenses allowance, subject to certain conditions.
- Officers residing within North Northumberland would be paid a relocation package out of the area if they were redeployed to another post within another Area Command/Department, providing they had served at least 3 years in North Northumberland.

2.9 In 2002/03 the cost of excess mileage, in relation to the above policy, was £32,000.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 A Rural Policing (Travelling) Policy, common to both North Northumberland and South West Northumberland, is proposed to assist with effectively resourcing both Area Commands.

The details of the proposed policy are as follows:

3.2 (i) Payment of excess mileage

The payment of excess mileage for all miles travelled between home and work, which are in excess of 13 each way. The excess mileage would be compensated at the 'Northumbria Police Mileage Rate' and would be taxable.

3.3 (ii) Deployment Policy - North Northumberland

The remaining provisions of the existing Deployment Policy will continue to apply to North Northumberland only, that is, the award of relocation expenses in certain prescribed circumstances.

3.4 The estimated costs per annum of the proposal are based upon the current establishment and are detailed below:

	Estimated Cost £
Mileage - South West Northumberland	45,000
Mileage - North Northumberland	51,000
Relocation costs - North Northumberland	6,000
TOTAL	102,000

4.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Nil

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The payment of the allowances will apply equally to all eligible police officers within both Area Commands. The recommended changes are not considered likely to have any disproportionate effect upon any group.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The estimated cost of the proposed policy for excess mileage is £96,000, an increase of £64,000 over current levels of spend, for which there is no specific budgetary provision. However, the Treasurer confirms that the additional costs can be met from within the overall revenue budget.

6.2 There are no additional costs arising from the relocation element of the policy.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that members agree:

- (i) The payment of excess mileage for all miles travelled between home and work, which are in excess of 13 each way, the excess mileage to be compensated at the 'Northumbria Police Mileage Rate' and be taxable.
- (ii) The remaining provisions of the existing Deployment Policy continue to apply to North Northumberland only, that is, the award of relocation expenses in certain prescribed circumstances.