

DELEGATION OF POWERS TO VEHICLE INSPECTORATE

Report of the Chief Constable

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to consult with members regarding the delegation of powers to the Vehicle Inspectorate.

2 BACKGROUND

The Police Reform Act 2002 empowers Chief Constables to establish 'Community Safety Accreditation Schemes' for certain purposes including contributing to community safety.

Such schemes enable Chief Constables to accredit fit and proper employers and staff, subject to being satisfied that they are appropriately trained, to carry out certain functions formerly exercisable only by police officers. Such accreditation, which can be revoked at any time, is exercisable by staff only in the course of their employment when in uniform. It allows them to carry out only the specific functions delegated to them, subject to any conditions which may be imposed by the Chief Constable.

It is a requirement of the Act that before establishing any such scheme, Chief Constables must consult with the Police Authority and also with Local Authorities within the police area.

The Vehicle Inspectorate are a part of Vehicle and Operator Services - an Executive Agency of the Department for Transport - and undertake safety inspections, mainly of goods vehicles. Until now, the exercise of their powers to examine vehicles on roads has always required the attendance of a police officer, who alone has been empowered to require vehicles to stop. As the Vehicle Inspectorate officers then carry out their functions unaided by the police officer, this has been an ineffective use of police resources.

It is proposed by the Home Secretary to pilot an accreditation scheme under the Police Reform Act in six police areas and subject to the success of that pilot, the Home Secretary has indicated that he would encourage all Chief Constables to accredit Vehicle Inspectorate staff to stop vehicles on roads for the purposes of safety inspections.

The Chief Constable has agreed to pilot this scheme within the Northumbria Police area. Vehicle Inspectorate staff will only be accredited once they have been trained and assessed by North Wales Police, who have agreed to run an Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) national training scheme to ensure consistency of approach. The Vehicle Inspectorate staff engaged in such checks will be vetted by the Criminal Records Bureau and will act only when in uniform, using suitably liveried Vehicle Inspectorate vehicles.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

That members agree:

- i) The Chief Constable consult Local Authorities within the force area, regarding the proposed pilot scheme to delegate powers to the Vehicle Inspectorate.
- ii) To receive a further report, detailing the outcome of this consultation.