

NORTHUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY

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COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

14 JUNE 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Foster (Chair)
Councillors Darke, Packham and Thompson
Mr Avery, Mr Brown, Mrs Brunton, Mrs Drury
and Dr Mahmood

APOLOGIES: Councillors Henry and Napier, Mr Foster and Mrs Guy

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 March 2004 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MANAGEMENT OF OFFENDERS' PROJECT

The Chief Constable gave a presentation on the above Home Office funded project which has three pilot sites at Etal Lane, Bedlington and Millbank Police Stations.

Trained and skilled Police staff are being appointed in the custody suites to release Police Officers and reduce the time spent in Police Stations to give more attention to addressing local policing problems.

The responsibility for the custody suite staff in the three pilot sites has transferred from the Area Commands to the Criminal Justice Department at Force Headquarters.

The project is to be independently evaluated by a company appointed through the tender process.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

3. POLICE AND COMMUNITY FORUMS

The schedules of issues raised at Police and Community Forums held since the last meeting of the Committee were submitted.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.

4. NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR INDEPENDENT CUSTODY VISITING

Further to minute 16 – 2003/04, the Home Office has now introduced the national standards for independent custody visiting and these have been sent to all the Authority's independent custody visitors.

The Authority's custody visiting scheme has been operating very successfully and incorporates most of the guidance included in the national standards. There are, however, some issues that need to be considered.

It suggests that the Authority may wish to develop its own code of conduct for its independent custody visitors. A draft code of conduct was submitted.

Procedures for consideration of complaints of misconduct, poor performance or inappropriate behaviour and termination of appointment of independent custody visitors were submitted.

It is proposed that a Custody Visiting Adjudication Panel comprising three Members of the Authority be established to consider complaints of misconduct, poor performance or inappropriate behaviour by an independent custody visitor.

It is also stated that an independent custody visitor should have the right of appeal against any decision of the Custody Visiting Adjudication Panel to terminate their appointment.

It is also proposed that a Custody Visiting Appeals Panel be set up to consider such appeals. The decision of the Custody Visiting Appeals Panel will be final.

The Authority has previously appointed Mr Avery, Mrs Brunton, Dr Mahmood and Councillor Packham to the Custody Visitor Interviewing Panel. It is proposed that they also become members of the Custody Visiting Adjudication and Appeals Panels, together with the appointment of two additional Members of the Authority.

From this group of six Members, three will sit on the Custody Visiting Adjudication Panel and then the other three would sit on the Custody Visiting Appeals Panel.

- RESOLVED -
- (i) That the information be noted.
 - (ii) That the code of conduct to be signed by all the Authority's independent custody visitors be approved, subject to the recommended change.
 - (iii) That the procedures for the consideration of complaints of misconduct, poor performance or inappropriate behaviour and termination of appointment of an independent custody visitor be agreed.

- (iv) That Custody Visiting Adjudication and Custody Visiting Appeals Panels be established and the Authority be asked to appoint the required two additional Members.

5. CUSTODY VISITING PANELS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The annual reports of the eight custody visiting panels were submitted. The panel arrangements continue to be an integral part of the Authority's custody visiting scheme.

RESOLVED - That the custody visiting panels' annual reports be noted.

6. CUSTODY VISITORS TO POLICE STATIONS SCHEME

The schedule of custody visits for the period 24 February – 15 May 2004 was submitted.

RESOLVED - That the information be noted.