

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND POLICING BOARD HELD ON FRIDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2007 AT 3:30PM IN WATERSIDE TOWER, BELFAST

PRESENT:

MEMBERS:

Professor Sir Desmond Rea (Chairman)
Ms Martina Anderson
Mr Tom Buchanan
Rt Hon Jeffrey Donaldson
Mr Alex Maskey
(1) Mr Basil McCrea
Ms Mary McKee
Mrs Rosaleen Moore
Mr Brian Rea
Mr Trevor Ringland
Mr David Rose
Mr Suneil Sharma
Mr Peter Weir

POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IN ATTENDANCE:

Sir Hugh Orde (Chief Constable)
Mr Joe Stewart (Director of Human Resources)
Ms Gail McGreevey (Media and PR)

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Trevor Reaney (Chief Executive)
Dr Debbie Donnelly (Deputy Chief Executive)
Mr Sam Hagen (Director of Corporate Services)
3 Board Officials

(1) Part item number 2 to close

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Mr Barry Gilligan (Vice Chairman), Mr Leslie Cree, Ms Dolores Kelly, Mr Daithí McKay, Mr Gearóid Ó hEára and Mr David Simpson.
NOTED.

2. REVIEW OF PSNI FULL TIME RESERVE

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Constable and his colleagues to the meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members, that the special Board meeting had been arranged with one item on the agenda, to receive a report from the Chief Constable on his decision on the continuing need for the remaining complement of Full Time Reserve officers. He informed Members that the Chief Constable and his Command Team had met on 20 September 2007 to complete an assessment of need in light of the prevailing security situation.

The Chairman referred Members to papers relating to the previous assessment on the future of the Full Time Reserve given to the Board 9 September 2004. He reiterated the Board's acknowledgement of the service given by the Full Time Reserve at that time.

The Chairman reminded Members that the context for the Chief Constable's assessment was recommendation 103 of the Independent Commission on Policing (Patten) Report which stated that 'the future police service should not include a Full Time Reserve'. In 2002, with the agreement of Government and the Board the contracts of the Full Time Reserve (FTR) officers were extended up to March 2005. In advance of that date, it was agreed to review the future requirement for the Full Time Reserve against the prevailing security situation. The Chairman advised the Board that when he briefed the Board in 2004, the Chief Constable had informed Members of his assessment that there was a requirement to retain 680 FTR officers and he had agreed to review by 2007 the requirement in the light of the prevailing security situation.

In inviting the Chief Constable to inform members of his decision, the Chairman advised him that the Board was mindful of community concerns expressed in recent days regarding the delivery of policing.

The Chief Constable briefly outlined the discussion at the meeting with his Command Team at the meeting on 20 September 2007. He gave an assessment of the current security situation and the threat posed by dissident republicans and loyalist paramilitaries and the impact this had on police patrolling and individual officers,

particularly in certain areas. The Chief Constable commented on the level of support for policing; the impact of the end of Operation Banner; the support given by TSGs; and the provision of security within the police estate.

The Chief Constable informed the Board that a decision had been taken to reduce the requirement of the FTR from 680 to 381, a reduction of 299. The breakdown of numbers to be retained would be 134 FTR in Urban Region and 247 FTR in Rural Region.

The Chief Constable stressed that the decision to reduce FTR numbers did not reflect on the calibre or contribution of officers. The decision took account of the changing policing environment and every FTR post had been reviewed. It was planned that the reduction would take place from 1 April 2008 onwards and the 299 officers would be managed out on a phased basis over a period of about 1 year. The Chief Constable advised that officers would continue to be able to avail of the compulsory severance scheme package and training from the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust (PRRT).

The contract situation in respect of the 381 FTR officers remaining after 2009 would be complex and the Human Resources Department would be taking this process forward. The current assessment envisaged that all these officers would leave before the end of March 2011. The officers would continue to be able to avail of the compulsory severance scheme package and training from the PRRT.

Members raised a variety of issues and sought further information and clarification concerning:-

- The capacity of PRRT - the current throughput is about 40 officers per month;
- The likely uptake of the severance scheme – this is difficult to predict but it is envisaged that the demand will increase as officers approaching the end of their contracts make decisions about their long term future; Roadshows on the severance scheme and PRRT are scheduled to commence in

November and it was anticipated this would provide a clearer picture on the likely uptake;

- Community concerns about the ability of the PSNI to provide neighbourhood policing and the provision of cover should large numbers of FTR seek to leave – the Chief Constable was content that he would have sufficient officers to provide police cover for the community, the deployment of FTR within each DCU would be managed by local DCU and Area Commanders;
- The date for reduction of the FTR to 381 officers – it was confirmed this would be completed over a period of approximately 12 months, with a phased programme of officers receiving PRRT Training;
- Whether in the light of a continuing improvement of the security situation the number of FTR officers could be decreased more quickly – the contractual situation was complex and outside this there was no power to require an officer to stay, in addition it was anticipated there would remain a requirement to fill gaps that would occur in particular areas;
- Other issues referred to during discussion included – the provision of security at stations; the programme of station closures; the communication strategy for informing the FTR ; and future funding.

The Board noted the decision of the Chief Constable. NOTED.

The Chairman thanked Members for attending the meeting at short notice and the Chief Constable and the Director of Human Resources for their contribution to the meeting.

(Meeting closed 4.45pm)

Secretariat
September